EDITORIAL GUIDELINES FOR BBC COMMERCIAL SERVICES ON EDITORIAL INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE FROM EXTERNAL INTERESTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Principles
3.0 Mandatory Referrals
4.0 Practices
   4.1 Advertising and Sponsorship
   4.2 Product Placement
   4.3 Product Prominence
   4.4 Personal Benefits
   4.5 Free and Reduced Cost Facilities, Products and Services
   4.6 Media Facility and Fact Finding Trips
   4.7 Promotional Material of Stories Supplied by Outside Bodies
   4.8 Game Shows
   4.9 Advertising and the BBC Brand
   4.10 Television Programmes made by BBC Worldwide Production Offices for Third Party Channels
   4.11 Online Links to Third Party Websites
   4.12 Logos and Credits Online
   4.13 Online Support Material

Appendix: Restrictions on References to BBC Commercial Products, Services and Channels on Licence Fee Funded Services

These Guidelines apply to all BBC Commercial Services operating in the UK and internationally, including BBC Worldwide services and commercial services run by BBC Global News.

These Guidelines apply to BBC commercial services in place of Section 14 of the BBC Editorial Guidelines

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The strength of the BBC brand, in the UK and around the world, is based on its reputation for integrity, impartiality and independence. These values are central to both the BBC’s publicly funded and commercial services. Our audiences everywhere must be able to trust the BBC and be confident that our editorial content is not influenced by commercial interests or political pressures. It is also of key importance that all BBC commercial services and any products or programmes bearing the BBC brand or BBC programme brands do not undermine the BBC’s reputation for quality and high editorial standards.

1.1 Commercial Funding

BBC commercial services are financed by a number of methods including the selling and licensing of products and services, advertising and sponsorship. It is important that none of these arrangements leads to doubts about the impartiality, integrity or independence of the BBC or its output. We should operate our Commercial Services honestly and fairly within the clear parameters of BBC core values and standards as set out in the BBC Editorial Guidelines and the BBC Fair Trading Guidelines.
2.0 PRINCIPLES

2.1
We must be independent of arrangements which could undermine our editorial integrity, independence or impartiality.

2.2
Advertising should not give the impression of BBC endorsement of the advertiser.

2.3
Advertising and sponsorship arrangements should not undermine the value of the BBC brand.

2.4
There must be a clear distinction between advertising and editorial content.

2.5
We must not give undue prominence in our editorial output to commercial products or services.

2.6
Any permitted product placement must not undermine the editorial integrity of the programme, channel or service.

2.7
There must be no surreptitious or subliminal advertising.

2.8
Under no circumstances should anyone working for the BBC or BBC commercial services receive personal benefits from suppliers, or accept goods or services as inducements.

3.0 MANDATORY REFERRALS

(Mandatory Referrals are part of the BBC’s editorial management system. While they will not, in themselves, meet the Principles in these Guidelines, they are an essential part of the process to ensure compliance and must be observed.)

3.1
Any proposal for a programme on a BBC Commercial Television Service operating in the UK to take product placement requires mandatory approval by the Director Editorial Policy and Standards and the Director of Archive Content.

3.2
Any proposal, in exceptional circumstances, for a BBC Commercial Television Service operating in the UK to digitally insert product placement into any programme, including a programme acquired from a third party, which has previously been broadcast on a licence
fee funded service must be approved by the Director Editorial Policy and Standards and the Director of Archive Content.

3.3

For Video on Demand Services operating in the UK, any proposal, in exceptional circumstances, to digitally insert product placement into programme content previously broadcast on a licence fee funded service must be approved by the Director Editorial Policy and Standards and the Director of Archive Content.

3.4

Any proposal in News and Current Affairs content to accept an expenses paid media facility or fact finding trip must be referred to a senior editorial figure in Global News or the relevant senior manager.

3.5

Any proposal to accept a media facility or fact finding trip in non-news and current affairs areas must be referred to a senior editorial figure who must ensure the acceptance of such facilities does not compromise the BBC’s reputation.

4.0 PRACTICES

4.1 ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP

Advertising and Sponsorship is a main source of revenue for many of the BBC’s commercial services such as television channels and commercial websites. It is also a very important source of revenue for BBC magazines.

All advertising and sponsorship must be conducted in a way that does not undermine the value of the BBC brand. It should be in accordance with the Advertising and Sponsorship Guidelines for BBC Commercial Services. These Guidelines apply to all BBC commercial services and BBC branded products and to any BBC branded service or product incorporated into a third party’s commercial service, such as a BBC channel syndicated on a third party website. These BBC Guidelines set out what advertising and sponsorship is acceptable in relation to the BBC brand in order to protect the BBC’s global reputation and to ensure that editorial independence is maintained. The Guidelines apply in addition to the relevant advertising regulations in specific territories. In the UK, therefore, they apply in addition to the Advertising Standards Authority CAP or BCAP codes and relevant Ofcom regulation.

4.1.1 Maintaining the distinction between advertising and editorial content

BBC Commercial Services must maintain a clear distinction between advertising and editorial content.

There must be no subliminal or surreptitious advertising on any BBC commercial service or in any programme made by a BBC commercial service.

(See Advertising and Sponsorship Guidelines for BBC Commercial Services)
4.2 PRODUCT PLACEMENT

Product placement is the inclusion for a commercial purpose of a reference (in vision or audio) to a product, service or trademark within a programme in return for payment or other valuable consideration.

In some cases, BBC commercial television channels or services may commission or make programmes which take appropriate product placement providing it does not undermine the editorial integrity of the programme, channel or service.

The taking of product placement for licence fee funded services is prohibited under the terms of the BBC Agreement. The BBC must not commission, produce or co-produce output for licence fee funded services which contains product placement. All programmes made by a BBC commercial service or a production company owned or connected with a BBC commercial service for broadcast on a BBC licence fee funded service must be free of product placement.

4.2.1 Key principles for all BBC commercial television services and channels

Product placement must not undermine the editorial independence or integrity of the service.

Product placement must not distort the editorial content of programmes.

References to placed products, services and trade marks must not be promotional or unduly prominent.

4.2.2 Restrictions on programme genres which may take product placement and types of product which may be placed

Product placement must not be included in:

- News and current affairs programmes.
- Religious programmes.
- Children’s programmes.
- Consumer advice content. If in doubt as to whether the content counts as “consumer advice”, specific advice should be sought from Editorial Policy.

Product placement of the following is not allowed:

- Any product or service connected to a political organisation.
- Any product or service connected to a religious body.
- Pornography and sexual services.
- Tobacco products (including cigarettes).
- Placement by on or behalf of any undertaking whose principle activity is the manufacture or sale of cigarettes or other tobacco products.
- Weapons.
- Prescription-only medicines.
- Infant formula or baby milk.
- Any product or service which may not be advertised on the service either because it is ruled out by relevant advertising regulation or official codes or by the Advertising and Sponsorship Guidelines for BBC Commercial Services.

Product placement of any product which might bring the BBC or its services into disrepute is not allowed.

4.2.3 BBC Commercial Services Operating in the UK

4.2.3.1 BBC Commercial Television Services Operating in the UK

BBC Commercial Television Services operating in the UK are required to adhere to the key principles listed above and to the detailed provisions on product placement in the Ofcom Broadcasting Code which places further restrictions on the type of products which may be placed, the types of programme which may take placement and has detailed requirements for signalling of placement. **Any proposal for a programme on a BBC Commercial Television Service operating in the UK to take product placement requires mandatory approval by the Director Editorial Policy and Standards and the Director of Archive Content.**

BBC Commercial Television Services operating in the UK must not digitally insert product placement into any content produced by the BBC which was originally made for licence fee funded services. Nor should they normally insert product placement into any programme made by an independent producer which was originally commissioned for broadcast on BBC licence fee funded services. **Any proposal, in exceptional circumstances, for a BBC Commercial Television Service operating in the UK to digitally insert product placement into any programme, including a programme acquired from a third party, which has previously been broadcast on a licence fee funded service must be approved by the Director Editorial Policy and Standards and the Director of Archive Content.**

4.2.3.2 Video on Demand Services Operating in the UK

Video on Demand services operated by BBC Commercial Services in the UK or any video on demand content supplied by the BBC or BBC Commercial Services to other operators in the UK are required to adhere to the key principles listed above on product placement and, where applicable, the Association for Television On-Demand (ATVOD) Code. Such services should not digitally insert product placement into any BBC content originally made for licence fee funded services. Nor should they normally insert product placement into any programme made by an independent producer which was originally commissioned for broadcast on BBC licence fee funded services. **Any proposal, in exceptional circumstances, to digitally insert product placement into programme content previously broadcast on a licence fee funded service must be approved by the Director Editorial Policy and Standards and the Director of Archive Content.**

4.2.4 BBC International Commercial Services

All BBC International Services must adhere to the Guidance on Product Placement for BBC International Channels and any Official Regulations applicable for broadcasts to the
relevant territories. BBC International Television Services broadcasting from the UK to within the EU are also subject to Ofcom Regulation.

4.2.5 Acquired programming containing product placement

4.2.5.1 BBC Commercial Channels operating in the UK

Product placement in acquired programmes broadcast by BBC Commercial Channels operating in the UK must be in accordance with the principles on product placement laid out in these Guidelines (see sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 above) and the requirements of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code.

4.2.5.2 BBC International Channels

Product placement in acquired programmes broadcast by BBC International Commercial Channels must be in accordance with the principles on product placement laid out in these Guidelines (see sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 above), the Ofcom Broadcasting Code where applicable and the Guidance for Product Placement on BBC International Channels.

(See Guidance online: Product Placement for BBC International Channels)

4.2.5.3 BBC Licence Fee Funded Channels

BBC licence fee funded channels broadcast some programmes acquired from third parties which have not been commissioned by the BBC. Such acquired programmes, for instance American drama series, may in some cases contain placement providing they were not made by or acquired from a BBC commercial service or any production company or entity connected to the BBC. Any broadcast of such programmes on BBC licence fee funded channels must be in accordance with the BBC Guidance on Product Placement for Licence Fee Funded Channels, the Ofcom Broadcasting Code and Government Regulations on Product Placement. It should be noted that licence fee funded channels do not broadcast output which requires signalling of product placement. Any proposal, in very exceptional circumstances, to carry output on licence fee funded services which requires signalling for product placement must be approved by the Director-General.

(See Guidance online: BBC Licence Fee Funded Television Services and Product Placement)

4.3 PRODUCT PROMINENCE

We need to be able to reflect the real world and this will involve referring to commercial products, organisations and services in our output. However, we must avoid any undue prominence of products or services. To achieve this we must:

- ensure that references to trade names, brand names and slogans are not unduly prominent and are editorially justified.
- not linger on brand names or logos and use verbal references sparingly unless there are very strong editorial reasons for repeated references to a brand.
- take particular care to minimise product references in output designed to appeal to children.
• only use material from advertising campaigns or promotions when clearly editorially justified. There may also be copyright considerations.

In addition, consideration must be given to the potential cumulative effect when planning to feature a specific product, brand or service numerous times on our output over a limited period, to ensure this does not lead to undue prominence.

4.3.1 Undue Prominence and Contributors

We should take care over undue prominence when contributors appear on chat shows, in magazine interviews or in other content where they are promoting a product, such as an album or a book. Visual references on television, particularly close-ups of an album cover or pages of a book, should be editorially justified.

4.3.2 Reviewing Products or Services

We must ensure there is no element of plugging when we review products or services. We should review a range from different manufacturers or suppliers during the course of a programme or a series of programmes or editions.

In the case of books, CDs, DVDs and other similar material we may accept copies for review. Those responsible for reviewing or covering theatre, concerts or other events or performances may accept review tickets. However, if we are reviewing products of significant value, such as a home cinema system or a car, we should return the product to the manufacturer or supplier.
4.3.3 Supply of Props in Drama, Comedy, Entertainment or Lifestyle Content

We must ensure the use of, or reference to, branded products, services or organisations in our drama, comedy, entertainment and lifestyle content is clearly editorially justified and that a wide range are used over time to avoid undue prominence.

4.3.4 Prop Placement

Prop placement involves the supply of production props free of charge (or at a reduced cost) where the provision of the prop does not involve payment or other valuable consideration to the broadcaster, producer or a connected person and the prop does not represent a “significant” value to any of these parties (i.e. more than a trivial residual value).

There must be no arrangements guaranteeing that placed props will receive exposure in programmes or other content.

If these conditions are met then it will be regarded as prop placement not product placement even if the inclusion of the product or service has resulted in the production saving money.

When props are accepted free or at a reduced cost there should be:

- clear records kept of all free or reduced cost props.
- no guarantee that any product or service will be featured and, if featured, no guarantee that it will be in a favourable light.
- no undue prominence of the prop which has been accepted.

Section 14 of the BBC Editorial Guidelines and Guidance online: Props, provide advice and guidance concerning the supply of props for programmes made for broadcast on BBC licence fee funded services.

4.4 PERSONAL BENEFITS

Under no circumstances should anyone working for the BBC or BBC Commercial Services receive personal benefits from suppliers or accept goods or services as inducements.

(See Editorial Guidelines Section 15 Conflicts of Interests: 15.4.30)

Managers should be aware of the stipulations of the Bribery Act 2010.

4.5 FREE AND REDUCED COST FACILITIES, PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

We should normally pay for travel, accommodation and most other services we use.

BBC commercial services may on occasion accept free or substantially reduced cost facilities, products or services, but in all cases such arrangements should not undermine the BBC’s independence or integrity.

Consumer and lifestyle programmes which review or feature a wide range of products may occasionally accept free or reduced cost products or services. But in such cases it is essential that we:
• keep accurate records of what has been accepted.
• only accept discounts if they are in line with those offered to other large organisations.
• do not guarantee any product or service will be featured, and if featured, that it will be in a favourable light.
• inform suppliers that they cannot refer to the BBC’s use of their products or services in any advertising or promotions.
• only give on-air and online credits if editorially justified.

Suppliers must not have an editorial say in the programme and should not be given a preview of it.

Managers should be aware of the stipulations of the Bribery Act 2010.

4.6 MEDIA FACILITY AND FACT FINDING TRIPS

Those working on News and Current Affairs content should not normally accept expenses paid trips unless they are the only way to cover a significant event. We should also consider whether to make a contribution towards the cost. Any proposal to accept such an expenses paid trip must be referred to a senior editorial figure in Global News or the relevant senior manager.

Any proposal to accept such a facility or trip in non-news and current affairs areas must be referred to a senior editorial figure who must ensure the acceptance of such facilities do not compromise the BBC’s reputation.

We must ensure that any reference in our content to any organisation which has facilitated a trip, is clearly editorially justified and that there is no element of promotion.

Staff working for BBC publications which review a range of services and facilities may seek assistance from travel providers such as tourist boards, airlines and hotels. However when seeking such assistance the BBC’s editorial integrity and independence must not be compromised. In such cases:

• there must be no assurances of coverage in exchange for such services.
• information should be published on a range of travel suppliers and not just those who provided us with assistance.

4.7 PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL OR STORIES SUPPLIED BY OUTSIDE BODIES

We must select and cover stories for our own independent editorial reasons and be on our guard for “spin” from outside bodies and commercial companies who may also try to place stories across our services in a short space of time.

We must ensure that when a product, service or organisation is named in a news report or factual content it is clearly editorially justified.
4.8 GAME SHOWS

We must conduct our game shows with integrity and probity. We must ensure that contestants are treated fairly and with respect, prizes are accurately described and appropriate, and clear rules are published.

The editorial content of the show should not be unduly influenced by commercial considerations, for example questions should not relate to a sponsor or a prize donor or its products or services.

The acceptance of any donated prize and any reference to the prize donor or a programme sponsor must be in accordance with the Advertising and Sponsorship Guidelines for BBC Commercial Services.

(see Advertising and Sponsorship Guidelines for BBC Commercial Services)

4.9 ADVERTISING AND THE BBC BRAND

Commercial advertising, promotion and press releases by outside companies should not give the impression of BBC endorsement, and should not “pass off” BBC programmes. It is important that any partnership arrangement involving an outside company does not suggest BBC endorsement of the company’s products or services.

We should not normally allow the BBC name, logos, titles, channel names, programme titles, formats or characters to be used by commercial advertisers. Any exception must be in accordance with the BBC Fair Trading Guidelines. Advice is available from Editorial Policy and BBC Worldwide Commercial Policy and Head of Legal Global News.

4.10 TELEVISION PROGRAMMES MADE BY BBC WORLDWIDE PRODUCTION OFFICES FOR THIRD PARTY CHANNELS

BBC Worldwide Production Offices make some programmes for broadcast on non-BBC channels operated by third parties. It is essential that these productions are in accordance with the BBC’s core values and standards. The key principles of these Guidelines should be followed, but in some cases the specific detail may not be appropriate. Careful decisions need to be made and BBC Worldwide Commercial Policy and BBC Editorial Policy can provide operational guidance in this area.

4.11 ONLINE LINKS TO THIRD PARTY WEBSITES

Part of the BBC’s role is to act as a "trusted guide on the web". Whenever we create content on a BBC site we should actively consider which external sites it may be editorially justifiable to link to. We offer external links from the editorial pages of the commercial sites, for example to provide additional information, source material or informed comment. BBC sites which cover matters of public policy, political or industrial controversy, or any other ‘controversial subject’ should normally offer links to external sites which represent a reasonable range of views about the subject.

(See BBC Editorial Guidelines Section 4: Impartiality 4.4.10)

We must not give the impression that we are endorsing a commercial product or service when linking to a commercial site. We should not include a link within the editorial text of a commercial site, in return for cash, services or any other consideration in kind.
Links from the editorial text of a commercial site must be editorially justified and should lead to sites which are:

- clearly relevant to the content of the BBC page where the link is placed.
- suitable for the likely audience.
- regularly updated and refreshed, if appropriate.
- normally factually accurate.

(See BBC Editorial Guidelines Section 5: Harm and Offence and Section 3: Accuracy 3.4.15)

Editors should review the suitability of maintaining these links as appropriate.

4.12 LOGOS AND CREDITS ONLINE

Editorial references to companies or other organisations on BBC websites should not normally contain any use of their logo. Use of commercial logos in the editorial content on BBC sites must be editorially justifiable. The BBC seeks to offer fair and appropriate credits on BBC websites. We normally give production credits, credits for the supply of material by third parties, credits for some outside events and credits for some software providers. On occasion, it may also be appropriate to credit outside information for reasons of transparency.

Any credits are given at the BBC’s discretion. In addition:

- they should be editorially justifiable.
- they should not be unduly prominent.

Caution needs to be exercised over third party logos, which should only be used in specific circumstances.

4.13 ONLINE SUPPORT MATERIAL

When we create web pages offering support material for programmes, they may sometimes contain links to external organisations. Any such external links within the editorial content on BBC websites should be justified by the relevance and value of the content linked to for the audience. If we provide a link to an outside advice agency, we should normally provide links to a reasonable range of other agencies as well.
APPENDIX:

RESTRICTIONS ON REFERENCES TO BBC COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS, SERVICES AND CHANNELS ON LICENCE FEE FUNDED SERVICES.

The Editorial Guidelines state that the BBC must not use its licence fee funded channels or services to promote any BBC commercial services or products.

(See Editorial Guidelines Section 14: Editorial Integrity and Independence from External Interests 14.4.23 – 14.4.30)

On licence fee funded output, all references to commercial services such as websites, international channels or any international or UK-based joint venture channel must be clearly editorially justified. Licence fee funded services should not run trails for commercial channels, services or programmes.

Commercial Products related to BBC Programmes and Services

The BBC, and independent companies working for the BBC, may produce and license commercial products and services to enhance and complement its output. However, licence fee funded services must never give the impression that they are unduly promoting any commercial product on air or online. Any references to BBC-related products on licence fee funded services must be for clear editorial reasons and there should be no element of plugging. In particular care must be taken not to promote BBC magazines.

Trails for Commercial Products related to BBC Programmes, on Licence Fee Funded Services

Licence Fee Funded Services must not make any promotional mentions of BBC-related products in programmes, although they may broadcast trails for some BBC-related products in junctions after relevant programmes.

BBC magazines must not be trailed on licence fee funded radio, television or online. However, BBC-related books, recordings, DVDs, CDs and CD-ROMs are the types of products which may be trailed where appropriate. Trails for other types of merchandise should not be produced.

Any product which is trailed must be under the BBC’s editorial control and must have been commissioned, licensed or developed directly in conjunction with the associated programme. Material which is trailed may be published by BBC Worldwide or by an outside organisation. Trails or announcements after programmes should give simple factual information without any element of hyping. All trails must be in accordance with the detailed guidance.

(See Editorial Guidelines Section 14: Editorial Integrity and Independence from External Interests 14.4.27)

Trails on Licence Fee Funded Websites for Commercial Products Related to BBC Programmes

Although we may not promote BBC-related commercial products within our publicly funded online services, we may in some circumstances offer specific informational trails on public service BBC Online.
Any such trails on our licence fee funded online services must be editorially justifiable and may only appear on the specific pages supporting the relevant programmes. They may include a small graphic or still and may, in some cases, link to a page on a commercial site where commercial products related to BBC programmes may be purchased.

We must not run trails on licence fee funded BBC websites for BBC magazines.

(See Editorial Guidelines Section 14: Editorial Integrity and Independence from External Interests 14.4.29)