

## Note to Broadcasters

### Synthetic media (including deepfakes) in broadcast programming

“Synthetic media” is an umbrella term for video, image, text, or voice that has been generated in whole or in part by artificial intelligence algorithms. Synthetic media has become increasingly prevalent online and has also been used in virtual reality, augmented reality, gaming, and other forms of digital media. It is also used in marketing, advertising, and the entertainment industry, including in filmmaking and broadcasting. As this type of technology continues to grow and evolve at a rapid rate, synthetic media is likely to become more prevalent in broadcast content.

In line with the right to freedom of expression we recognise the benefits such technologies can bring to both broadcasters and audiences. There are clear benefits to broadcasters who can use this technology, for example the potential to increase audience engagement through the creation of content that would be difficult or impossible to achieve with traditional media. However, the use of this technology also poses challenges to broadcasters and potential risks to audiences. For example, “DeepFake” software can replace a person in an existing image or video with someone else’s likeness with realistic results. The use of ‘DeepFake’ software has grown exponentially and it poses a number of challenges for broadcasters, these include:

- **Misinformation and disinformation:** synthetic media could be used to create fake news, propaganda and other forms of disinformation that can spread quickly online leading to challenges for broadcast journalists in authenticating footage from online sources.
- **Trust and credibility degradation:** with the rise of deepfakes and other synthetic media, audiences may find it difficult to trust the authenticity of content and audiences could potentially be harmed if it is not apparent they are watching footage that is ‘Deepfake’.
- **Fairness and Privacy:** audiences could mistake ‘Deepfake’ footage of a real person in a way that could result in unfairness to them or potentially unwarrantably infringe their privacy.

Ofcom is confident that the existing rules within the Broadcasting Code will protect audiences from the potential harms that might arise through the use of synthetic media. For example, depending on the context, the relevant rules could include (but would not be limited to):

- [Section Two \(Harm and Offence\)](#): rules to protect audiences from potential harm and offence and from material which may be materially misleading (Rules 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3);
- [Section Five \(due impartiality and due accuracy\)](#): ensures news content is reported with due accuracy (Rule 5.1);
- [Section Seven \(Fairness\)](#): includes a set of practices which ensure that broadcasters avoid unjust or unfair treatment of individuals or organisations in programmes; and

- **Section Eight (privacy):** includes a set of practices which ensure that broadcasters avoid any unwarranted infringement of privacy in programmes and in connection with obtaining material included in programmes.

Ofcom emphasises that, consistent with broadcasters' right to freedom of expression and audiences' right to receive information and ideas, it is fundamental that both broadcasters and audiences can explore new and emerging technologies – including synthetic media - as they become an increasing part of our daily lives. However, Ofcom would like to remind all its licensees of their ongoing responsibility to comply with the Broadcasting Code in order to protect audiences from harm and maintain the high levels of trust in broadcast news as well as to ensure individuals and organisations are not treated unfairly and/or their privacy is not unwarrantably infringed.

**We would therefore advise all licensees to consider carefully whether their compliance processes need to be adapted or developed to account for the potential risks involved in the use of synthetic media technologies to create broadcast content.**