## Contents

### Chapter 1: Mental health overview
- Mental health problems – an introduction 1
- What’s mental health? 3
- Do I have mental health problems and shou ld I get some help? 4
- Reporting on mental health - media guidelines 6
- Mental health in the UK: The big picture 7
- We need to rethink how we classify mental illness 8
- Key findings from the 2017 *Mental Health of Children and Young People report* 10
- 1.4 million people referred to NHS mental health therapy in the past year 12

### Chapter 2: Mental health challenges
- Setting more exams to combat stress among school students is utterly absurd 13
- Exam stress for school children 14
- Teenagers who access mental health services see significant improvements, study shows 15
- School mental health referrals rise by more than a third 16
- 1 in 10 children have no one to talk to in school when they are worried or sad 18
- Risk and protective factors 20
- Funding for mental health services fails to reach the frontline 22
- Mental health: there are fewer beds, nurses and psychiatry trainees than in 2010 23
- These black women felt excluded by mainstream mental health charities – so they started their own 24
- An interest rate rise may put thousands at risk of mental health problems 26

### Chapter 3: Managing mental health
- Five lifestyle changes to enhance your mood and mental health 28
- For the first time, print media reporting of mental health is significantly more balanced and responsible with more coverage than ever before – latest study shows 30
- Gaming addiction can be treated on the NHS after it is declared a medical disorder 31
- LSD and magic mushrooms could heal damaged brain cells in people suffering from depression 32
- Why we invest in mental health 33
- Report shows that therapy dogs may reduce risk of self-harm in prisoners 34
- What treatments are available? 35
- ASMR videos could be a new digital therapy for mental health 36
- UK teenagers turn to mobile apps to help with mental ill health 38

### Appendixes
- Key facts 40
- Glossary 41
- Assignments 42
- Index 43
- Acknowledgements 44
Mental health problems – an introduction

There are many different mental health problems. Some of them have similar symptoms, so you may experience the symptoms of more than one mental health problem, or be given several diagnoses at once. Or you might not have any particular diagnosis, but still be finding things very difficult. Everyone’s experience is different and can change at different times.

What types are there?

**Depression**

Depression is a feeling of low mood that lasts for a long time and affects your everyday life. It can make you feel hopeless, despairing, guilty, worthless, unmotivated and exhausted. It can affect your self-esteem, sleep, appetite, sex drive and your physical health.

In its mildest form, depression doesn’t stop you leading a normal life, but it makes everything harder to do and seem less worthwhile. At its most severe, depression can make you feel suicidal, and be life-threatening.

Some types occur during or after pregnancy (antenatal and postnatal depression), or may come back each year around the same time (seasonal affective disorder).

**Anxiety problems**

Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future.

Occasional anxiety is a normal human experience. But if your feelings of anxiety are very strong, or last for a long time, they can be overwhelming. You might also experience physical symptoms such as sleep problems and panic attacks.

You might be diagnosed with a particular anxiety disorder, such as generalised anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety (social phobia), panic disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). But it’s also possible to experience problems with anxiety without having a specific diagnosis.

**Phobias**

A phobia is an extreme form of fear or anxiety triggered by a particular situation (such as going outside) or object (such as spiders), even when it’s very unlikely to be dangerous.

A fear becomes a phobia if the fear is out of proportion to the danger, it lasts for more than six months, and has a significant impact on how you live your day-to-day life.

**Eating problems**

Eating problems are not just about food. They can be about difficult things and painful feelings which you may be finding hard to face or resolve. Lots of people think that if you have an eating problem you will be over- or underweight, and that being a certain weight is always associated with a specific eating problem, but this is a myth. Anyone, regardless of age, gender or weight, can be affected by eating problems.

The most common eating disorder diagnoses are anorexia, bulimia, binge eating disorder, and other specified feeding or eating disorder (OSFED). But it’s also possible to have a very difficult relationship with food and not fit the criteria for any specific diagnosis.
**Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)**

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a type of anxiety disorder. The term is often misused in daily conversation – for example, you might hear people talk about being ‘a bit OCD’, if they like things to be neat and tidy. But the reality of this disorder is a lot more complex and serious.

OCD has two main parts: obsessions (unwelcome thoughts, images, urges, worries or doubts that repeatedly appear in your mind; and compulsions (repetitive activities that you feel you have to do to reduce the anxiety caused by the obsession).

**Bipolar disorder**

Bipolar disorder (once called manic depression) mainly affects your mood. With this diagnosis you are likely to have times when you experience: manic or hypomanic episodes (feeling high); depressive episodes (feeling low); and potentially some psychotic symptoms.

Everyone has variations in their mood, but in bipolar disorder these swings can feel very extreme and have a big impact on your life. In between, you might have stable times where you experience fewer symptoms.

**Schizophrenia**

Views on schizophrenia have changed over the years. Lots of people question whether it’s really a distinct condition, or actually a few different conditions that overlap. But you may still be given this diagnosis if you experience symptoms such as:

- psychosis (such as hallucinations or delusions)
- disorganised thinking and speech
- feeling disconnected from your feelings
- difficulty concentrating
- wanting to avoid people
- a lack of interest in things
- not wanting to look after yourself.

Because psychiatric experts disagree about what schizophrenia is, some people argue that this term shouldn’t be used at all. Others think the name of the condition doesn’t matter, and prefer to just focus on helping you manage your symptoms and meeting your individual needs.

**Personality disorders**

Personality disorder is a type of mental health problem where your attitudes, beliefs and behaviours cause you longstanding problems in your life. If you have this diagnosis it doesn’t mean that you’re fundamentally different from other people – but you may regularly experience difficulties with how you think about yourself and others, and find it very difficult to change these unwanted patterns.

There are several different categories and types of personality disorder, but most people who are diagnosed with a particular personality disorder don’t fit any single category very clearly or consistently. Also, the term ‘personality disorder’ can sound very judgemental.

Because of this it is a particularly controversial diagnosis. Some psychiatrists disagree with using it. And many people who are given this label find it more helpful to explain their experiences in other way.

*This information was published in October 2017 – to be revised in 2020.*
The World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of wellbeing in which every individual achieves their potential, copes with the normal stresses of life, works productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel and act. Like physical health, mental health is something we all have. It can range across a spectrum from healthy to unwell; it can fluctuate on a daily basis and change over time.

**Mental health spectrum**

- **Healthy**
- **Coping**
- **Struggling**
- **Unwell**

Adapted from Centre for Mental Health

---

**What’s mental health?**

**Good mental health helps children:**
- learn and explore the world
- feel, express and manage a range of positive and negative emotions
- form and maintain good relationships with others
- cope with, and manage change and uncertainty
- develop and thrive.

Building strong mental health early in life can help children build their self-esteem, learn to settle themselves and engage positively with their education. This, in turn, can lead to improved academic attainment, enhanced future employment opportunities and positive life choices.

**Promoting mental health**

There is good evidence that schools can help all children develop essential social and emotional skills through delivering bespoke sessions designed to cultivate these skills, through ensuring broader opportunities are capitalised on to reinforce skills across the curriculum and through whole-school modelling of these skills. Social and emotional skills prevent poor mental health from developing, help all children cope effectively with setbacks and remain healthy. These whole-school programmes are noted to benefit all children but particularly those who are at most risk.

Schools can support these children by providing them with additional help to understand and manage their thoughts, feelings and behaviour and build skills that help them to thrive, such as working in a team, persistence and self-awareness.

**Coping skills**

Mental health doesn’t mean being happy all the time. Neither does it mean avoiding stress altogether. Coping and adjusting to setbacks are critical life skills for children, but it’s important that they develop positive, rather than negative, coping skills.

**Negative coping skills** are attitudes and behaviours that have often been learned in the absence of positive support and in the face of stressful and often traumatic events and experiences which, over time, may put good mental health at risk.

*Example:* children at risk of or experiencing maltreatment in the home may have learned to react quickly and in a certain way (flight or fight or freeze) to survive and keep themselves safe. But in a classroom, these reactions may not work well and could get them into trouble, disrupt learning and make them unpopular with teachers and peers. In the longer term, these learned behaviours may also impact on their mental health and wellbeing, sense of belonging, educational achievements, peer relationships and life chances.

**Positive coping skills** are ways of thinking, attitudes and behaviours that allow children to deal with stress or adversity and which help them flourish. These positive coping skills form an important part of a child’s ability to be resilient in the face of setbacks and challenges. Children who have cultivated robust coping skills can still thrive with support, even when they are mentally unwell.

**What affects child mental health?**

A child’s mental health is influenced by many things over time. Children have different personalities and they will be exposed to a range of factors in their homes and communities that can trigger worsening mental health (risk factors), or alternatively protect them and help them feel able to cope (protective factors). Ideally, all children should have at least one adult in their life who is monitoring whether they are coping or not.

**Identifying children who are struggling**

Deteriorating mental health is not always easy to spot and can be overlooked until things reach crisis point. At least two children in every primary school class (based on average class size of 27) are likely to have a diagnosable mental health condition. This rises to three to four students in every...
class by secondary school age (Green, 2005). Around a further six to eight children in each primary school class will be struggling just below this ‘unwell’ threshold (Wyn, J. et al., 2000).  

**Mental health: why it’s important to schools**  
Schools are the ideal environment in which to promote and support the mental health of primary age children, ensuring they can reach their potential and take advantage of opportunities throughout their lives:

- Most children spend a significant amount of time in school and school staff are in a good position to piece together the jigsaw of what may be undermining a child’s mental health.
- Parents also tend to approach schools first for advice when children experience mental health challenges.
- There is strong evidence that school programmes which promote social and emotional skills can improve mental health and academic attainment.
- Children with good mental health are more positive, settled and can achieve better academically.
- Early help can also prevent unnecessary crises, poor life chances and significant costs affecting the public purse.

*February 2018*


---

**Do I have mental health problems and should I get some help?**

Chances are that within your lifetime you will experience some form of mental health problem, the most common of these being depression and anxiety. But because most people with a mental health condition will never access any formal types of support or treatment, many of these mental health problems will go undiagnosed. Longitudinal studies (i.e. research conducted with the same people over many years) support the notion that experiencing a diagnosable mental health condition or disorder at some stage during a person’s life is the norm, not the exception. A study recently published by Schaefer and colleagues (2017) established that over 80% of participants from their health and development study were found to have a diagnosable mental health condition, from the time of their birth to midlife. This was amongst a representative group of more than 1,000 people studied over a four-decade period.

So if most of us will experience mental ill-health at some time in our lives, why is it so hard for people to recognise the signs and symptoms of this in themselves, and subsequently access treatment? Here are five reasons why people may be reluctant to seek professional help:

1. **Mental health stigma and its impact**

Regrettably there is still a stigma associated with being diagnosed with a mental health condition. Understandably, given this stigma, people with mental health problems can worry that they will get judged and seen as weak, so many can end up keeping their experiences to themselves or denying that their problems exist. Fortunately, there is now greater protection against discrimination on the basis of mental ill-health, as a result of legislation like the 2010 Equality Act. This legal protection makes it easier for people to open up about their mental health problems, especially in the workplace. In addition to this legal advancement, large-scale public campaigns have sought to challenge mental health stigma, and increase awareness of its negative impact. For example ‘Time to Change’ in England, which has sought to reduce mental health-related stigma and discrimination since 2009.

2. **Problems in the mild to moderate range**

Every individual is different, and it can be hard for us to recognise if what we are experiencing is ‘normal’ or not. As the saying goes, ‘normal is nothing more than a cycle on a washing machine’ and the real norm is that most of us will experience a period of mental ill-health sometime in our lives. For the majority this will take the form of something...
in the ‘mild to moderate range’ of difficulties. For example, temporary periods of feeling low are common, and are often a normal reaction to the stressors we can experience. For most people, seeking support from their friends and/or family members can help them get through these difficult times. Self-help resources and interventions like mindfulness can also be useful in assisting people in overcoming life’s challenges. If your low mood or other mental health problems persist, affecting your sleep, relationships, job and/or appetite, this can indicate that you may require some additional help, and a visit to your general practitioner (GP) would be recommended.

“Normal is nothing more than a cycle on a washing machine.”
– Whoopi Goldberg

3: When is it really bad?
It is important to be able to recognise when a mental health problem has progressed to becoming a major issue. Many people can struggle to notice in themselves when their mental health problems are more severe. This might seem surprising, but because a person can be suffering over a long period of time, their symptoms may not initially have a dramatic impact. In addition to this, even when mental health problems can be debilitating, a person may still feel that their problems aren’t bad enough to warrant professional treatment. If you are having persistent worries, distressing feelings or frightening experiences it can really help to get support and information. This may initially involve visiting your GP. Sometimes people may need specialised mental health services and a GP can help people access services. GPs assist many people with their mental health problems, and recently there have been some indications that they are supporting more and more people with mental health problems.

4: Securing treatment
There are a range of supports and interventions available for people with mental health problems. But it can be hard to know what to look for when attempting to get help. It can be overwhelming and exhausting just finding the right type of support for you. Do you want a psychotherapist? A practitioner psychologist? A counsellor? Is medication an option? Is a combination of medication and face-to-face therapy the best interventions for you? What is funded and what do you need to pay for yourself? There are also the challenges associated with getting a session or appointment that is at a time and place that is convenient to you. There is Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT), which began almost 10 years ago and has delivered treatment to over 900,000 adults with anxiety and depression, both in individual sessions and in group-based format. However, there can be waiting lists for IAPT and for other state-funded forms of therapy. For those with the funds available to pay for treatment, websites like welldoing.org can assist people to find a therapist.

5: A lack of hope
Hope is of fundamental importance to all humans, but when someone is struggling with mental health problems, this can be compromised. Sometimes people will not access help, even if they recognise that they have significant issues, in part because they feel so negatively about their future. A lack of hope in regard to one’s future is a sign that a person needs to seek help. It could be from a family member, your GP, the Samaritans, from the MIND infoline or a trusted friend.

December 2017

Europe’s transition to a green energy future

Sweden is one of the leading lights when it comes to energy transition in Europe. The Nordic country gets more than half of all its energy needs from renewables. By 2045, it plans to be carbon free. The Scandinavian state’s success, however, is in stark contrast when compared to others. Despite the EU setting transition targets for 2020, some countries continue to lag behind. For instance, Poland still remains deeply reliant on coal to generate its energy. With so many jobs dependent on the fossil fuel, there is an obvious reluctance to change.

Marek Wystyrk is a former Polish miner. He admits that transitioning to cleaner fuels is necessary but still believes coal has a future.

‘I think we have to use our wealth of coal. I’m from a coal-mining family. But I know that we have to facilitate change because of pollution and our climate,’ he says.

Marek steered his eldest son, Szymon, towards a high school specialising in green energy. For Szymon, the change can’t come soon enough.

‘The environment is very important to me, because in the place where I live, I don’t need to smoke cigarettes. Just by breathing, it’s like smoking ten packets of cigarettes a day… but my generation will make a change. We are starting to do that.’

While the majority of Poland’s energy still comes from coal, small steps are being made to generate greener energy in the country through solar farm initiatives.

By 2020, 15 per cent of Poland’s energy needs should come from renewables.

There is also a push to make coal cleaner. Krzysztof Kapusta is a researcher at the Clean Coal Technology Centre in Mikolow. The lab is funded by the EU.

---

**Share of energy from renewable sources**

(in % of gross final energy consumption)

2004 vs. 2016

---
'Gasification of coal is better than conventional burning because it makes it possible to reduce the environmental impact of the coal utilisation – by removing contaminants such as sulphur and mercury, for example, before coal utilisation.'

At the University of Silesia, which is located in the heart of Poland’s coal mining region, Professor Piotr believes change can happen quickly if the government steps in.

‘There are a lot of enthusiastic people, they start to use... different kinds of renewable energy. If our government will lead them to be active in this way, the situation will change very fast, I think.’

Europe’s energy picture

- Europe has doubled its renewable use in the past 12 years.
- The energy we waste in Europe could power all our buildings’ needs.
- Energy efficient products could save families up to 500 Euros a year.
- More than a quarter of the innovations for new tech in renewables are made by European companies.
- The ocean at Europe’s doorstep could eventually power 10% of all our demand.

But, the drive towards cleaner energy has not been without its problems. Countries in Europe continue to disagree over the bloc’s 2030 transition targets.

Sweden’s Energy Minister, Ibrahim Baylan, however, insists change is both inevitable and economically beneficial.

‘Coal is not anymore the cheapest way of producing electricity or energy... Solar is! This year, we are seeing off-shore wind being built without any subsidies. So, I think for those countries who are still arguing for fossil fuels... for coal... From economic point of view I cannot understand it anymore.

‘Obviously when we made the transition it also created tens of thousands of local jobs... As a politician you have also to see not only the jobs you have today.’

Nevertheless, the gap between EU countries when it comes to generating energy from renewables is significant.

In 2016, Eurostat figures showed that Austria (72.6%) and Sweden (64.9%) produced at least three-fifths of all their electricity from renewable energy sources, while Portugal (54.1%), Denmark (53.7%) and Latvia (51.3%) produced more than half.

At the opposite end of the scale, the lowest proportions of renewables were registered in Luxembourg (5.4%), Malta and the Netherlands (both 6.0%), Belgium (8.7%) and the United Kingdom and Cyprus (both at 9.3%).

6 February 2018

The above information is reprinted with kind permission from euronews. © euronews 2019
Imagine a world where every country has not only complied with the Paris climate agreement but has moved away from fossil fuels entirely. How would such a change affect global politics?

The 20th century was dominated by coal, oil and natural gas, but a shift to zero-emission energy generation and transport means a new set of elements will become key. Solar energy, for instance, still primarily uses silicon technology, for which the major raw material is the rock quartzite. Lithium represents the key limiting resource for most batteries – while rare earth metals, in particular ‘lanthanides’ such as neodymium, are required for the magnets in wind turbine generators. Copper is the conductor of choice for wind power, being used in the generator windings, power cables, transformers and inverters.

In considering this future it is necessary to understand who wins and loses by a switch from carbon to silicon, copper, lithium, and rare earth metals.

The countries which dominate the production of fossil fuels will mostly be familiar:

**Meet the new ‘renewable superpowers’: nations that boss the materials used for wind and solar**

*An article from The Conversation*

By Andrew Barron, Sêr Cymru Chair of Low Carbon Energy and Environment, Swansea University

The list of countries that would become the new ‘renewables superpowers’ contains some familiar names, but also a few wild cards. The largest reserves of quartzite (for silicon production) are found in China, the US, and Russia – but also Brazil and Norway. The US and China are also major sources of copper, although their reserves are decreasing, which has pushed Chile, Peru, Congo and Indonesia to the fore.

Chile also has, by far, the largest reserves of lithium, ahead of China, Argentina and Australia. Factoring in lower-grade ‘resources’ – which can’t yet be extracted – bumps Bolivia and the US onto the list. Finally, rare earth resources are greatest in China, Russia, Brazil – and Vietnam.

Of all the fossil fuel producing countries, it is the US, China, Russia and Canada that could most easily transition to green energy resources. In fact it is ironic that the US, perhaps the country most politically resistant to change, might be the least affected as far as raw materials are concerned. But it is important to note that a completely new set of countries will also find their natural resources are in high demand.

### Fossil fuels: largest reserves by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oil (billion barrels)</th>
<th>x1</th>
<th>Gas (trillion cubic metres)</th>
<th>x2</th>
<th>Coal (billion tonnes)</th>
<th>x3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BP Statistical Review of World Energy, June 2017
An OPEC for renewables?
The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a group of 14 nations that together contain almost half the world’s oil production and most of its reserves. It is possible that a related group could be created for the major producers of renewable energy raw materials, shifting power away from the Middle East and towards central Africa and, especially, South America.

This is unlikely to happen peacefully. Control of oilfields was a driver behind many 20th-century conflicts and, going back further, European colonisation was driven by a desire for new sources of food, raw materials, minerals and – later – oil. The switch to renewable energy may cause something similar. As a new group of elements become valuable for turbines, solar panels or batteries, rich countries may ensure they have secure supplies through a new era of colonisation.

China has already started what may be termed ‘economic colonisation’, setting up major trade agreements to ensure raw material supply. In the past decade it has made a massive investment in African mining, while more recent agreements with countries such as Peru and Chile have spread Beijing’s economic influence in South America.

Or a new era of colonisation?
Given this background, two versions of the future can be envisaged. The first possibility is the evolution of a new OPEC-style organisation with the power to control vital resources including silicon, copper, lithium, and lanthanides. The second possibility involves 21st-century colonisation of developing countries, creating super-economies. In both futures there is the possibility that rival nations could cut off access to vital renewable energy resources, just as major oil and gas producers have done in the past.

On the positive side there is a significant difference between fossil fuels and the chemical elements needed for green energy. Oil and gas are consumable commodities. Once a natural gas power station is built, it must have a continuous supply of gas or it stops generating. Similarly, petrol-powered cars require a continued supply of crude oil to keep running.

In contrast, once a wind farm is built, electricity generation is only dependent on the wind (which won’t stop blowing any time soon) and there is no continuous need for neodymium for the magnets or copper for the generator windings. In other words solar, wind, and wave power require a one-off purchase in order to ensure long-term secure energy generation.

The shorter lifetime of cars and electronic devices means that there is an ongoing demand for lithium. Improved recycling processes would potentially overcome this continued need. Thus, once the infrastructure is in place, access to coal, oil or gas can be denied, but you can’t shut off the sun or wind. It is on this basis that the US Department of Defense sees green energy as key to national security.

A country that creates green energy infrastructure, before political and economic control shifts to a new group of ‘world powers’, will ensure it is less susceptible to future influence or to being held hostage by a lithium or copper giant. But late adopters will find their strategy comes at a high price. Finally, it will be important for countries with resources not to sell themselves cheaply to the first bidder in the hope of making quick money – because, as the major oil producers will find out over the next decades, nothing lasts forever.

18 February 2018
# Contents

## Chapter 1: What is censorship?
- What is freedom of speech? ......................................................... 1
- Isn’t freedom of speech just saying whatever you want? .................... 2
- The top ten things you need to know about freedom of expression laws ................................................................. 3
- The new blasphemies on campus ............................................. 4
- What you need to know about the new free speech pledge for universities ................................................................. 5
- Internet censorship: making the hidden visible .......................... 6
- Which countries censor the internet today? ............................... 8
- The technology of censorship ................................................... 10
- The rise of social media censorship ......................................... 11

## Chapter 2: Freedom of the press
- UK among the worst in western Europe for press freedom .............. 12
- Press freedom: getting darker .................................................... 14
- A free press is fundamental to a mature society – but the press is not infallible ................................................................. 16
- How deadly has 2018 been for journalists? ................................. 17
- Global crackdown on fake news raises censorship concerns .......... 18
- Fake news has always existed, but quality journalism has a history of survival ................................................................. 20
- New initiative to help children identify fake news welcome addition to on-going digital resilience debate .............................................. 21
- Older children are getting wise to fake news ............................... 22
- How to spot fake news ............................................................... 23

## Chapter 3: Censorship and us
- Why we age rate films ............................................................... 24
- Ghosts, liberated women and Morgan Freeman: the films banned for odd reasons ................................................................. 26
- Why does China’s Xi hate Winnie the Pooh? ............................... 27
- Mary Whitehouse was right: why, even in the streaming age, we need the watershed more than ever ................................. 28
- Snowflakes and trigger warnings: Shakespearean violence has always upset people ................................................................. 30
- Should books ever be banned? .................................................. 31
- How censorship through the decades cracked down on literary sex, drugs... and poo poo head ................................................................. 32
- What do protests about Harry Potter books teach us? .................. 34
- The state of artistic freedom ..................................................... 36

Key facts ................................................................................... 40
Glossary .................................................................................... 41
Assignments ............................................................................... 42
Index ......................................................................................... 43
Acknowledgements .................................................................. 44
Why we age-rate films

Why do we do it?
All films shown in the UK need an age rating by law.

What are the ratings?
The BBFC rate films before they are released in cinemas. These days there are five certificates for cinema films:
- U
- PG
- 12A
- 15
- 18

In theory, anyone can see a U or a PG, although you and your parents and teachers are encouraged to think carefully about whether a PG film will be suitable for you if you are younger than eight years old.

With 12A films you must be 12 or older to go and see them, unless you have an adult with you. The accompanying adult must take responsibility for the younger child watching the film (and the BBFC recommends they read the ratings info for the film to help them decide whether it is likely to be suitable).

Anyone wanting to release a film, video or DVD for showing in cinemas or watching at home has to make sure that their film has a BBFC age rating symbol. It’s against the law to try and sell videos and DVDs without this. Films that you see at the cinema also have to display the right rating.

When was the BBFC started?
The BBFC was created by the film industry in 1912, long before anyone had even heard of Harry Potter or Pixar. It wanted to make sure that all of its films, (videos and DVDs had not been invented then), were checked on behalf of the whole country. Cinemas needed a licence to show films because film stock burns very easily and there was a big fire risk.

Local councils, who were, and still are, in charge of cinemas up and down the country, grew to accept the BBFC’s decisions. Even today, for films shown in cinemas, councils have the power to ignore any decision made by the BBFC and can give them their own age ratings. For example, in 1993, the comedy film Mrs. Doubtfire was given a 12 classification by the BBFC. Some councils disagreed with our decision and gave the film a PG.

An important change came with the arrival of video in the early 1980s. In 1984, a new law was passed, The Video Recordings Act, which put the BBFC in charge of classifying all videos for home use. The law asks Compliance Officers to make sure that works are classified for appropriate audiences and make sure that they show nothing that might be harmful to people, especially young children.

What does all this mean exactly?
Well, for example, very scary or gory horror films that might upset younger children are unlikely to be found at U, PG or 12A/12. As for harmful material, the BBFC has to note any dangerous or criminal activities on a video or DVD, such as scenes that show, in detail, how to hurt people or themselves and or scenes in which children are encouraged to do dangerous things, or take part in activities which could hurt them or those around them. Scenes like this may also be cut from the video before it’s released to the public – though this is very rare.

The Compliance Officers at the BBFC also have to be aware of other laws, such as those which protect animals. It is against the law in this country to show films or videos in which an animal has been treated cruelly during the production. The owners of any film showing such a scene are asked to remove it (cut it out) before a certificate is given and the film is allowed to be released.

Filmmakers have always been allowed to get advice from the BBFC about the age rating their film will probably get. Sometimes they send in the film before it is finished, and Compliance Managers watch it without special effects, music or other details. The Compliance Managers can give a good idea of the rating the film will probably get based on our guidelines. If the filmmakers decide the likely rating is too high, they may decide to change the film, eg by removing scenes or changing the special effects, so they are more likely to get the lower rating they want. This is called a ‘cut for category’ and is the most common sort of cut made to films in the UK.

Now, as well as classifying films released in UK cinemas and on DVD and Blu-ray, the BBFC provide age-ratings for Video On Demand platforms.

The above information is reprinted with kind permission from The British Board of Film Classification.
© 2019 the British Board of Film Classification

www.bbfc.co.uk
ISSUES: The Censorship Debate

Chapter 3: Censorship and us

British Board of Film Classification Age Ratings

A U film should be suitable for audiences aged four years and over, although it is impossible to predict what might upset any particular child. U films should be set within a positive framework and should offer reassuring counterbalances to any violence, threat or horror.

A PG film should not unsettle a child aged around eight or older. Unaccompanied children of any age may watch, but parents are advised to consider whether the content may upset younger or more sensitive children.

Films classified 12A and video works classified 12 contain material that is not generally suitable for children aged under 12. No one younger than 12 may see a 12A film in a cinema unless accompanied by an adult. Adults planning to take a child under 12 to view a 12A film should consider whether the film is suitable for that child. To help them decide, we recommend that they check the ratings info for that film in advance. No one younger than 12 may rent or buy a 12 rated video work.

No one younger than 15 may see a 15 film in a cinema. No one younger than 15 may rent or buy a 15 rated video work.

No one younger than 18 may see an 18 film in a cinema. No one younger than 18 may rent or buy an 18 rated video work.
Wonder Woman is the latest blockbuster to fall foul of the censors. From Borat to Sex and the City 2, here are some of the more peculiar film bans

By Ben Child

The ‘glory’ days of the British censor – when grey-faced men would take a pair of scissors to every 1980’s horror flick, from Maniac to The Evil Dead, while the tabloids screamed ‘video nasty’ in the background – are thankfully gone. These days it takes something truly horrific – a Human Centipede 2 or a Hate Crime – to ruffle the feathers of the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). Not to worry, for the grand tradition of banning movies remains firmly extant in other corners of the world. This week Lebanon refused to grant the comic book-action flick Wonder Woman a theatrical release on the grounds that its star is from Israel, at a time when the two countries are at war. While the merits of the ban have been hotly debated online, what is clear is that it’s not the only film to fall foul of the censors in recent years. Here are some of the more unlikely of those film bans:

The Uzbek thriller banned for not starring Morgan Freeman

If you’ve been to the cinema much over the past decade or so, you might be under the impression that Morgan Freeman is in every film. If a Hollywood producer is looking for a senior alpha male, primed to deliver lines of grandiloquent yet pithy wisdom at just the right moment, Freeman is most definitely their man. But just because it seems as if the Shawshank Redemption star is ubiquitous on the big screen, that doesn’t mean it’s OK to pretend he’s in your film when he’s not – as the Uzbekistan production studio Timur Film discovered in February. Posters for the action thriller Daydi (Rogue) featured a hooded Freeman between two local actors. Unfortunately, this was the Hollywood star’s one and only contribution to the movie, as he does not appear in a single frame of the film. Daydi was duly banned by Uzbekistan’s film licensing body, which we like to imagine being staffed almost entirely by outraged fans of Driving Miss Daisy.

When Borat was banned for upsetting Kazakhstan

Sacha Baron Cohen’s 2006 comedy depicts its dubious hero’s homeland as a place where racists and criminals are on every run-down street corner, but (in Borat’s own words) the ‘prostitutes are the cleanest in the region’. Not surprisingly, authorities in Kazakhstan did not take too kindly to its rendering, and prohibited the movie from release in cinemas. Borat was also banned by Russia and every Arab country except Lebanon, with a censor at Dubai’s ministry of information labelling the comedy ‘vile, gross and extremely ridiculous’, adding that if all the offensive scenes were cut out, only 30 minutes would remain. Attitudes towards the movie in Kazakhstan do appear to have shifted, however: Borat was a huge hit when released on DVD in 2007, and in 2012 the nation’s foreign minister, Yerzhan Kazykhanov, thanked the film’s makers for helping to increase tourism to the country. ‘With the release of this film, the number of visas issued by Kazakhstan grew tenfold,’ he said.

Sex and the City 2 banned in the UAE for showing liberated women

There are many honest cinema goers who wish Sex and the City 2 had been outlawed worldwide. But the decision by United Arab Emirates censors to ban the critically reviled comedy sequel, in which Carrie Bradshaw and her New York gal pals head to Abu Dhabi on holiday, still makes uncomfortable reading. Officials were unhappy at scenes referencing homosexuality and highly displeased by a sequence in which one of the main characters is shown kissing in public, according to local reports. The most galling scene, however, appears to have been one in which the four ladies are rescued by Muslim women – who take off their burqas to reveal stylish western clothes underneath.

Ghostsbusters banned in China for promoting superstition

No one can say Sony didn’t do its best to secure a Chinese release for the all-female remake of the classic 80’s comedy last year. Executives even proposed renaming the movie Super Power Dare-to-Die Team in order to try and avoid upsetting local censors. But it would be hard to come away from watching Ghostbusters without being at least partly aware that the movie is about... well, ghosts. And ghosts are a taboo subject in the world’s most populous nation, due to communist views on the supernatural: official Chinese censorship guidance prohibit films that ‘promote cults or superstition’. A source told the Hollywood Reporter in July...
last year that Paul Feig’s film would not be getting a release, but refused to confirm this was due to the movie’s spooky subject matter.

That time the Philippines banned every Claire Danes movie

Woe betide the Hollywood star who slags off shooting conditions in a foreign country during a routine magazine interview, then discovers that, thanks to the internet, it isn’t just Americans who can access Vogue’s website. This is what happened to the Homeland star, who described the Philippines capital, Manila, as ‘a ghastly and weird city’ during the promotion for her 1999 drug mule drama Brokedown Palace, then compounded the issue by telling Premiere the metropolis ‘smelled of cockroaches, with rats all over, [had] no sewerage system,’ and was populated by people with ‘no arms, no legs, no eyes’. Then-president Joseph Estrada, himself a former movie star, called for Danes to be banned from the country, and Manila’s city council banned every film starring the Romeo + Juliet actor from screening in cinemas there. Danes later issued an apology, saying that ‘because of the subject matter of our film Brokedown Palace, the cast was exposed to the darker and more impoverished places of Manila’. But local politicians were unimpressed and refused to lift the ban – which as far as we can tell, remains in place.

When North Korea banned 2012 for failing to stick to the script

Roland Emmerich’s apocalyptic 2009 disaster flick features a global geological catastrophe that almost wipes out the human race. This did not go down well with the leadership of the rogue nation, for whom the year 2012 has significance, not for being the date on which the Mayans predicted the end of the world, but for supposedly marking the beginning of North Korea’s rise to the status of global superpower. This prediction was based on 2012 being the 100th anniversary of the birth of Kim Il-Sung, founder of the nation, and North Koreans who illegally purchased DVDs from China were punished with up to five years in prison for watching a movie that dared to suggest history might turn out differently. The irony is that 2012, with its depiction of American cities such as Los Angeles sinking into the Pacific, would probably have proven quite cheery viewing for the North Korean high command.

8 August 2018

Why does China’s Xi hate Winnie the Pooh?

By Cindy Yu

W ho is Winnie the Pooh like Ai Weiwei? Both have landed in political hot water with the Chinese government. The artist Ai has a long history of running into trouble with the Chinese authorities. In fact, earlier this week, Ai’s Beijing studio was demolished for reasons unknown (though perhaps you can take a guess). And Pooh’s become an equally worthy dissident, all because he bears an unfortunate resemblance to President Xi Jinping. Judging by his waistline, President Xi is obviously settling in to his cushy job with too much tea and honey. And he’s feeling sensitive about it. So much so that Disney’s upcoming film about Pooh bear, Christopher Robin, has been banned in China.

How did the world’s most successful authoritarian regime get so touchy about a cartoon bear? It all started in 2013, when Xi met Obama. The picture that came out of the meeting shows the two men walking side-by-side – one of the better diplomatic pictures to have come out of world leader meetings, you might think. That was until someone, rather astutely, posted the pic next to a picture of Pooh walking with the rather taller, thinner Tigger. The resemblance was – and is – quite amusing, but I’m not sure Beijing is known for its humour.

Censors quickly took down the image. And just as any common sense could have told you, this repression made the easygoing tongue-in-cheek comparison into an irresistible big red button. Cue Chinese ‘netizens’ conducting experiments on social media to see if their Pooh will be deleted. Some of them were, some of them weren’t. But even if the censorship wasn’t a blanket ban, the harm had been done. A.A. Milne’s loveable bear had now been turned into a fully-fledged symbol of sarcastic resistance in the meme age.

Perhaps President Xi and his gaggle of censors can learn from Milne. As Christopher Robin says to Pooh: ‘you’re braver than you believe’. As leader of the world’s rising power, it’s time Xi learned to brush off these small trivial acts of rebellion.

2 June 2017

27