

OFCOM CONTENT SAMPLING REPORT

Stations: 107.8 Play Radio (Southampton), 107.2 Play Radio (Winchester)

Dates sampled: Friday 24 July 2009, Saturday 25 July and Monday 27 July, 2009

Content Sampling Report finding:

This Content Sampling report follows Ofcom's decision in May this year to record a breach of the Southampton and Winchester licences, at that time held by Radio Hampshire Ltd, for a failure to deliver their published Formats.

After listening to three days of output from the two stations (rebranded from Radio Hampshire to Play Radio under new ownership), we concluded that both services were now compliant with their respective Formats and featured – particularly in the case of the Southampton station – a good range of local news and information.

Play Radio (Southampton) and Play Radio (Winchester) are both operating within their respective Formats.

107.8 Play Radio Character of Service

A SOUTHAMPTON CENTRED SERVICE OF LOCAL NEWS, VIEWS, INFORMATION AND ENTERTAINMENT MIXED WITH MAINSTREAM HITS FROM THE LAST 4 DECADES

Licensed area	Southampton area (as in Ofcom advertisement)
Frequency	107.8 MHz
Service duration	24 hours
Locally-made hours	At least 10 hours a day during daytime weekdays (must include breakfast). At least 4 hours daytime Saturdays and Sundays.
Local news bulletins	At least hourly at peaktime weekdays and weekends. Outside peak, UK-wide, nations and international news should feature.

107.2 Play Radio Character of Service

A LOCALLY ORIENTED, BROAD MUSIC AND INFORMATION STATION FOR WINCHESTER AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

Licensed area	Winchester area (as in Ofcom advertisement)
Frequency	107.2 MHz
Service duration	24 hours
Locally-made hours	At least 10 hours a day during daytime weekdays (must include breakfast). At least 4 hours daytime Saturdays and Sundays.
Local news bulletins	At least hourly at peaktime weekdays and weekends. Outside peak, UK-wide, nations and international news should feature.

Full Content Sampling Report

The Southampton and Winchester local commercial radio licences were formerly held by Radio Hampshire Ltd, which ceased broadcasting on 28 May 2009, as a result of the company entering into administration. The two licences were subsequently sold by the administrator to Play Radio Ltd. This Content Sampling Report was undertaken to ensure the new owners are now complying with the published Formats of the two stations, given that licence breaches had been recorded by Ofcom when Radio Hampshire ceased broadcasting. We requested recordings for each of the Southampton and Winchester services, now rebranded as Play Radio, from 24, 25 and 27 July 2009 (this was three weeks after the licence transfers had taken effect).

Both these radio stations are small-scale services that were licensed to provide a concentrated editorial focus on the localities they serve, rather than the delivery of a particular music format. This is reflected in their published Formats, which both place an emphasis on the provision of local information.

107.8 Play Radio Southampton

On the Play Radio Southampton service, we heard a level of information and news relevant to Southampton and the immediately surrounding area that would comfortably fulfil the station's Format remit to be: "A Southampton centred service of local news, views, information and entertainment".

As required by the Format, local news bulletins were aired at peak times (i.e. weekday breakfast and afternoon drivetime, and weekend late breakfast). The selection of local stories we heard included plans for the redevelopment of Southampton's Guildhall Square; a serious road accident at Chandler's Ford; a carjacking incident in Millbrook; and the launch of a campaign called 'Brand New Forest' to encourage New Forest residents to spend money locally. There were also a number of significant 'regional' stories concerning the Isle of Wight which would have been likely to be of strong interest to the Southampton audience, given the relationship between the city and the island.

Local sport coverage included regular local sports bulletins at all peak times, and included interviews with the Southampton FC manager Alan Pardew and various Southampton players, as well as giving coverage to local non-league football teams such as Eastleigh, and to local cricket. The Saturday afternoon sports show featured regular live football reports from Southampton's pre-season friendly with Hearts, and from Eastleigh vs Winchester.

Play Radio Southampton was also strong, during the output we heard, on providing local information and features. 'What's On' information, in the form of 'The Southampton Guide' was aired frequently, while there were some more unusual local information slots such as 'Car Park Pat' (news of car park availability in the area) and 'Down at the Docks,' which reported on incoming and outgoing ships at the Port of Southampton. During Friday and Saturday output (24/25 July) there were a number of reports into regular programming from the Netley Marsh Steam and Craft Fair, including interviews with organisers and exhibitors.

107.2 Play Radio Winchester

As a result of co-location and programming sharing arrangements agreed by Ofcom when the stations were owned by Radio Hampshire Ltd, the output of the Winchester station is permitted to be broadcast from studios in Southampton, and on weekdays the two stations are allowed to share six out of the 10 hours of local programming which each of their Formats require.

Listening to the local news output of Play Radio Winchester, we noted that the amount of local material specific to the Winchester area being broadcast (as opposed to stories derived from the wider local region, including Southampton) was less than was the case for the Southampton service, even during the Winchester-only weekday breakfast show. Nonetheless, in addition to some Winchester-specific news stories, Play Radio Winchester frequently broadcast its own (i.e. not shared with the Southampton service) 'What's On' information ('The Winchester Guide'), and also aired locally relevant travel bulletins. So, we were satisfied that there was enough Winchester area information broadcast during the three monitoring days for Play Radio Winchester to broadly satisfy the Format requirement that it should be a "locally-oriented" service for Winchester and the surrounding area.

Both the Southampton and Winchester licences have broad musical remits in their Formats, and this was reflected in Play Radio's unusually wide playlist, which while majoring on pop stretched from Alternative Rock tracks from the likes of Space, Kasabian, Florence and the Machine and The Smiths through to Easy Listening and MOR tracks from artists such as Abba, Leo Sayer and Frank Sinatra. There was also a specialist soul show presented by Mick Brown on the Saturday night, and an '80s themed weekend.

107.8 Play Radio Southampton and 107.2 Play Radio Winchester are both operating within Format, so no further regulatory action will be taken.

Notes on Content Sampling

Ofcom's Content Sampling Procedure :

In Ofcom's move of emphasis from input regulation towards output regulation, content sampling has become an important regulatory process. Ofcom has already published the methods to be applied when formally listening to local commercial stations to create a content sampling report. These methods and processes are published at <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/radio/ifi/contentssampling/>.

Background Information

Content sampling is a major Ofcom tool in judging the level of station compliance with regard to

- a) Public File*
- b) Localness*
- c) Music*

Content sampling may be carried out as part of an organised process, or may be as the result of a complaint.

Public File

Public File obligations are enshrined within each station's Licence. The Public File and/or station website will, in many cases, not only support the findings of content sampling, but signpost monitors to output that enhances specific aspects of localness and music, whether or not it involves the specific days being monitored.

Localness and Music

Localness guidelines are available on Ofcom's website at www.ofcom.org.uk/radio/ifi/rbl/car/localness/ and station localness and music obligations will vary considerably from Format to Format.