
Ofcom Bulletin for complaints about BBC online material

Issue number: 19

Date: 10 August 2020

Introduction

This Bulletin reports on complaints made to Ofcom about the BBC's online material. It gives the outcome of Ofcom's consideration on each complaint received and where relevant, provides Ofcom's opinion on whether the BBC observed the relevant standards for its online material.

Under the BBC's Charter and Agreement, set by Government and Parliament, the BBC is responsible for the editorial standards of its online material. Ofcom has a responsibility to consider and give an opinion on whether the BBC has observed relevant editorial guidelines in its online material¹. This came into effect with the Digital Economy Act on 27 April 2017.

Online material means content on the BBC's website and apps. This includes written text, images, video and sound content. It does not extend to social media, Bitesize, BBC material on third party websites and World Service content, among other things.

[Ofcom's published arrangements and procedures for handling complaints about BBC online material](#) can be found on the Ofcom website. These documents contain more information about the types of complaints we will consider and the process we will normally follow when handling complaints.

Complaints about BBC online material must follow the 'BBC First' approach, where they are made to the BBC in the first instance. If a complainant is not satisfied with the BBC's final response to a complaint about its online material, they may seek an independent opinion on it from Ofcom.

Unlike our role regulating the standards of BBC broadcasting and on demand programme services (such as the BBC iPlayer), Ofcom has no enforcement powers for BBC online material.

¹ This does not include content on BBC on demand programme services (such as the BBC iPlayer), which must comply with relevant rules in Ofcom's [Broadcasting Code](#).

Complaints assessed, not accepted

Closed between 13 June and 31 July 2020

Below is an alphabetical list of complaints which, after careful assessment, Ofcom considered did not raise substantive issues under the relevant BBC editorial guidelines that warranted further consideration by Ofcom.

[More information about how Ofcom assesses complaints about BBC online material.](#)

Complaints about BBC online material

BBC online material	Date¹	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website	28/04/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Climate change: 'Clear and unequivocal' emergency, say scientists	06/11/2019	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: General election 2019: Tories seek to avoid manifesto calamity	25/11/2019	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Profumo scandal evidence still secret in 'cover-up'	01/02/2020	Accuracy	1

¹ This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material. In the event that the complainant does not specify a date, we use the date that the article was published.

BBC First

Complaints closed between 13 June and 31 July 2020

Complaints about BBC online material, made to Ofcom in the first instance

The table below is an alphabetical list of complaints about the BBC's online material which Ofcom has not assessed. This is because Ofcom only considers complaints about the BBC's online material if the complainant has already complained to the BBC and the BBC has reached its final view on the complaint. The complaints in this table were made to Ofcom before completing the BBC's process.

BBC online material	Date ¹	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website	06/12/2019	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	11/12/2019	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	21/12/2019	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website	11/01/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	16/01/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	21/02/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC News website	26/05/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	12/06/2020	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website	13/06/2020	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website	13/06/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	01/07/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website (UK Home news)	n/a	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: BBC 100 Women 2019: Who is on the list this year?	23/10/2019	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: BBC commits £100m to increasing diversity on TV	22/06/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Brexit sound bites and slogans will run out	26/01/2020	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Brexit: Gove defends £705m plan for border posts and staff	12/07/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: George Floyd protests: What do 'thug', 'white privilege' and 'ally' mean?	06/06/2020	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: George Floyd: London anti-racism protests leave 27 officers hurt	07/06/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Haim: 'We'd be taken more seriously if we were brooding and aggressive'	30/05/2020	Editorial Integrity and Independence from External Interests	1

¹ This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material. In the event that the complainant does not specify a date, we use the date that the article was published.

BBC online material	Date¹	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website: Have Your Say	01/07/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: House prices see largest monthly fall for 11 years, says Nationwide	02/06/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Investigation into man's death in Torquay police cell	08/06/2020	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: London protests: More than 100 arrests after violent clashes with police	14/06/2020	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Newcastle Black Lives Matter counter-protest: Police officers injured	13/06/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: North Belfast: Man taken to hospital after being shot with police baton rounds	13/06/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: North Belfast: Man taken to hospital after being shot with police baton rounds	15/06/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Reality TV stars auditioned to 'promote' poison diet drink on Instagram	18/12/2019	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Roblox: 'I thought he was playing an innocent game'	18/12/2019	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: The campaign to put more pounds into black-owned businesses	27/06/2020	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Tom Bosworth: 'I cried to myself in a field when Olympics were postponed'	05/06/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC Sport website	23/11/2019	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: 'Coronavirus or not, black people face harm all the time'	27/06/2020	Harm and Offence	1
Market Data webpage	16/01/2020	Accuracy	1

Out of remit complaints

The table below includes complaints which have not been assessed by Ofcom because they fall outside of Ofcom's remit under its arrangement with the BBC.

BBC online material	Date²	Number of complaints
BBC News website	19/06/2020	1

² This is the date the complainant first became aware of the online material. In the event that the complainant does not specify a date, we use the date that the article was published.

BBC online material	Date²	Number of complaints
BBC News website: I was racially abused – then my school tried to suspend me	06/11/2019	1
Twitter	07/06/2020	1

[More information about how Ofcom assesses complaints about BBC online material.](#)