

Ofcom ref: 00502679

10 January 2018

Ref: 00502679 Freedom of Information: Right to Know Request

Thank you for your request for information on complaints received by Ofcom about the BBC. Your request was received on 9 December 2017 and I am dealing with it under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You requested the following information:

- *the number of complaints received by Ofcom concerning the BBC between 2010-2016;*
- *the number of above complaints which were upheld by Ofcom; and*
- *action taken by Ofcom in relation to upheld complaints.*

Before responding to your questions, it may be helpful to provide some background information on Ofcom's editorial complaints procedures and reporting, and our remit over BBC complaints.

Complaints about broadcast standards are handled under our *Procedures for handling complaints, investigations and sanctions on TV, radio and video-on-demand services*¹. After an initial assessment, we consider whether there may have been a breach of our rules, including the Broadcasting Code. In cases where we think there may have been a breach, we will launch an investigation. The possible outcomes of an investigation are that we decide an issue is in breach, resolved or not in breach of our rules. Ofcom's Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin, published every fortnight on our website, includes decisions about the complaints we have considered here:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/bulletins/broadcast-bulletins>.

A new BBC Royal Charter and Agreement was published in December 2016, which gave Ofcom new regulatory powers over the BBC. Ofcom took up its new responsibilities on 3 April 2017.

Prior to this date, and the period you have requested information on, complaints relating to programmes on BBC services funded by the licence fee about due accuracy, due impartiality, elections and referendums fell outside Ofcom's remit. Regulatory responsibility for such complaints

¹ Available at:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/guidance/procedures>

Please note that since April 2017, complaints about BBC content have been subject to Procedures for investigating breaches of content standards on BBC broadcasting services and BBC ODPS, here:

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0002/100100/Procedures-for-investigating-breaches-of-content-standards-on-BBC-broadcasting-services-and-BBC-on-demand-programme-services.pdf

sat with the BBC Trust. Complaints about all other areas, such as harm and offence, were considered by Ofcom against the requirements of its Broadcasting Code.

To answer your questions:

1. The number of complaints received by Ofcom concerning the BBC between 2010-2016.

While details of all complaints we have considered about the BBC are listed in the Bulletins, for assessment cases we hold only searchable information on our complaints database for cases from 2014 onwards. We have, therefore, responded in terms of complaints from 2014 to 2016.

In that period Ofcom received 7,073 complaints related to programmes broadcast by the BBC.

For context, in the same period Ofcom received over 61,000 complaints in total across the approximately 2,300 television and radio services we licence and regulate.

2. The number of above complaints which were upheld by Ofcom

We hold accessible records of cases where we have launched an investigation for the entire period you requested, from 2010 to 2016.

For BBC services, Ofcom launched 37 investigations, with 21 resulting in breaches of the Broadcasting Code (or other Ofcom codes) being recorded.

To put that figure in context, during the period from 2010 to 2016, Ofcom launched 2,192 investigations in total, with 1,663 resulting in breaches of the Broadcasting Code (or other Ofcom codes) being recorded.

3. Action taken by Ofcom in relation to upheld complaints.

Details are available in the respective bulletin entries for each case referred to below:

Programme	Service	Bulletin Issue	Date of issue
Saturday Kitchen Live	BBC 1	153	08/03/10
BBC News at Ten	BBC 1	176	21/02/11
Line of Duty	BBC 2	220	17/12/12
Good Cop trailer	BBC 1 HD	220	17/12/12
Today	BBC Radio 4	232	17/06/13
Dave Bayliss Interview	BBC Radio Cumbria	243	02/12/13
Our World - Sri Lanka's Unfinished War	BBC 1 and BBC News channel	249	03/03/14
BBC News at One	BBC 1	254	19/05/14
Top Gear Burma Special	BBC 2	259	28/07/14
Radio 1's Big Weekend	BBC Radio 1	264	20/10/14
World's Craziest Fools	BBC 3	264	20/10/14
Newsbeat	BBC Radio 1	266	10/11/14
The Radio 1 Breakfast Show with Nick Grimshaw	BBC Radio 1	272	02/02/15

News	BBC 1	276	30/03/15
South East Today	BBC 1 South East	276	30/03/15
Sponsored programmes	BBC World News	285	17/08/15
The Voice UK: The Live Final	BBC 1	287	14/09/15
Alex Dyke	BBC Radio Solent	292	09/11/15
The One Show	BBC 1	297	11/01/16
Red Rock	BBC 1	314	10/10/16
Don't Make Me Laugh	BBC Radio 4	317	21/11/16

I hope this information is of assistance. If you have any queries, then please contact information.requests@ofcom.org.uk. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Alistair Hall

If you are unhappy with the response or level of service you have received in relation to your request from Ofcom, you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be treated as a formal complaint and will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will acknowledge the complaint and inform you of the date by which you might expect to be told the outcome.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter**. There is no statutory deadline for undertaking internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exception cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact:

Steve Gettings
The Secretary to the Corporation
Ofcom
Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF