

Reference: 00576792

Jerin John
Information Rights Adviser
Information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

13 September 2018

Ref: 00576792 Freedom of Information: Right to Know Request

Thank you for your request relating to complaints about the coverage of Jeremy Corbyn, which was received by Ofcom on 23 August and has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the Act”).

For your information, complaints about broadcast standards are carefully assessed under Ofcom’s Broadcasting Code, which sets strict standards for programme content which broadcasters must follow. If we consider that these rules may have been broken, we work swiftly to investigate. Should we conclude our rules have been broken, we have the power to impose sanctions on broadcasters. You can find decisions about complaints we have received in Ofcom’s Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin, published every fortnight on our website here:

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/enforcement/broadcast-bulletins>.

We log complaints on our database by category of the complaint issue (with reference to the rules in our codes). Therefore, there is no specific category (or rule) used exclusively to identify the individual subject of a complaint such as whether a complaint relates to bias towards or against a Jeremy Corbyn.

The information is not readily accessible, and we would only be able to identify this information by manually searching individual cases. This would require a considerable amount of time to manually locate, retrieve, identify and extract any relevant information. We estimate that this would take at least 18 hours, and so the cost of complying with your request will exceed the appropriate limit under Freedom of Information regulations¹. This means we are unable to provide information in the *form* you requested for questions 2,3,4,5,7,8, 10 and 11 of your request.

However, in order to assist you, we have run a computerised search of our complaints database in respect of the above questions, using the term “Corbyn” for complaints made between 1 October

¹ Section 12 of the FoI Act provides that a public authority is not obliged to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the “appropriate limit”. The appropriate limit is set out in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004, and is, for Ofcom, £450. That sum is intended to cover the estimated costs involved in determining whether Ofcom holds the information requested, identifying, locating, retrieving and extracting the information from any document containing it. The Regulations provide that costs are to be estimated at a rate of £25 per person per hour.

2016 and 23 August 2018. This returned results where Jeremy Corbyn is mentioned in a complaint. It does not necessarily mean that the complaint itself is about coverage of Jeremy Corbyn and therefore caution should be exercised when considering and interpreting the results.

Please see below our responses to your questions in turn.

1) How many complaints has Ofcom received about coverage of Jeremy Corbyn in each month since October 2016 to the date of this request?

As explained above, Ofcom is unable to provide this information, however we can confirm that Ofcom received 537 complaints which included a reference to “Corbyn”. Listed by each month, they are as follows:

Month	Number of complaints
Oct 2016	5
Nov 2016	0
Dec 2016	1
Jan 2017	4
Feb 2017	1
Mar 2017	0
Apr 2017	22
May 2017	147
Jun 2017	87
Jul 2017	9
Aug 2017	7
Sep 2017	7
Oct 2017	5
Nov 2017	8
Dec 2017	4
Jan 2018	2
Feb 2018	10
Mar 2018	140
Apr 2018	23
May 2018	14
Jun 2018	3
Jul 2018	11
Aug 2018	27

2) How many of the complaints listed in question one accused the BBC of bias against Mr Corbyn?

As explained above, Ofcom is unable to provide this information, but can confirm 291 complaints which included a reference to “Corbyn”, related to the BBC.

3) How many of the complaints listed in question one accused the BBC of bias towards Mr Corbyn?

Please see response to question 2).

4) How many of the complaints listed in question one accused ITV of bias against Mr Corbyn?

As explained above, Ofcom is unable to provide this information, but can confirm 25 complaints which included a reference to “Corbyn”, related to the BBC.

5) How many of the complaints listed in question one accused the ITV of bias towards Mr Corbyn?

Please see response to question 4).

6) How many of the complaints in questions 4 and 5 were upheld against ITV?

Although Ofcom is unable to provide the specific information sought in question 4 and 5, we can confirm that out of the 25 ITV complaints mentioned above, none were upheld.

7) How many of the complaints listed in question one accused Channel 4 of bias against Mr Corbyn?

As explained above, Ofcom is unable to provide this information, but can confirm 117 complaints which included a reference to “Corbyn”, related to Channel 4.

8) How many of the complaints listed in question one accused the Channel 4 of bias towards Mr Corbyn?

Please see response to question 7).

9) How many of the complaints in questions 7 and 8 were upheld against Channel 4?

Although Ofcom is unable to provide the specific information sought in questions 7 and 8, we can confirm that out of the 117 Channel 4 complaints mentioned above, none were upheld.

10) How many of the complaints listed in question one accused Sky News of bias against Mr Corbyn?

As explained above, Ofcom is unable to provide this information, but can confirm 61 complaints which included a reference to “Corbyn”, related to Sky News.

11) How many of the complaints listed in question one accused Sky News of bias towards Mr Corbyn?

Please see response to question 10) above.

12) How many of the complaints in questions 10 and 11 have been upheld against Sky News.

Although Ofcom is unable to provide the specific information sought in questions 10 and 11, we can confirm that out of the 61 complaints mentioned above, none were upheld.

13) Please provide a table showing the number of times each of the top ten repeat correspondents complained about coverage of Jeremy Corbyn.

Complainant	Number of complaints
Complainant 1	3
Complainant 2	3
Complainant 3	3
Complainant 4	2
Complainant 5	2
Complainant 6	2
Complainant 7	2
Complainant 8	2
Complainant 9	2
Complainant 10	2

We 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,

Jerin John

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 exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact:

Jacqui Gregory
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