
Ofcom Bulletin for complaints about BBC online material

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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 19 September and 13 November 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	Date ¹	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website	01/06/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Blackpool woman accessed child abuse images in hospital bed	14/07/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Bosnia: Protesters condemn Mass for WWII Croat Nazi collaborators	16/05/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Dominic Cummings: Did he break lockdown rules?	27/05/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Earlier coronavirus lockdown 'could have saved 36,000 lives'	23/05/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Trump condemns all white supremacists after Proud Boys row	02/10/2020	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 19 September and 13 November 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 app: UK could face 50,000 case a day by mid-October without action	21/09/2020	Privacy	1
BBC News website	26/02/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	28/05/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	07/06/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC News website	17/10/2020	Other	1
BBC News website	22/10/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website / Match of the Day	12/07/2020	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Black History Month 2020: How slavery shaped our cities	09/10/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Boris Johnson pledges ban on 'gay conversion therapy'	21/07/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: 'Coronavirus or not, black people face harm all the time'	23/07/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Coronavirus: 'Long Covid' patients need treatment programme, doctors say	06/09/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Coronavirus: The health claims that won't go away	27/06/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Coronavirus: Some people shielding allowed outdoors from Monday BBC News website: Coronavirus: Who should be shielding?	31/05/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Covid: Antibodies 'fall rapidly after infection'	27/10/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Donald Trump 'paid \$750 in federal income taxes in 2016 and 2017' – NY Times	28/09/2020	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 online material	Date¹	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website: General Election 2019 – what to look out for on LGBT issues	17/11/2019	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: General election 2019: What to look out for on LGBT issues	23/11/2019	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Muslim anger at Macron: 'It's like secularism on steroids'	30/10/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: 'Execution' video prompts war crime probe	24/10/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Pubs and restaurants in central belt to close	07/10/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: The Papers	22/09/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Trump's Middle East peace plan: 'Deal of the century' is huge gamble	29/01/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: UK sends US evidence on Islamic State 'Beatles'	01/09/2020	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: US election result: What Biden's victory means for rest of world	07/11/2020	Harm and Offence	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: Ben Carson demands BBC presenter Katty Kay's mic is cut	14/10/2016	1
Twitter	28/05/2020	1

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

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.