
Ofcom Bulletin for complaints about BBC online material

Issue number: 24

Date: 10 May 2021

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 27 February and 30 April 2021

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 Bitesize: What is White Privilege? and White privilege: What is it and how can it be used to help others?	22/10/2020	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Abortion in NI: Women subject to 'postcode lottery'	21/10/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Coronavirus: Home abortions decision reversed BBC News website: Coronavirus: Home abortions approved during outbreak	24/03/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Coverage of the trial of Julian Assange	16/12/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Covid-19: Lockdown needs to be stricter, scientists warn	09/01/2021	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Deepfake queen prompts 200-plus complaints to Ofcom	29/12/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Rangers FC administrators settle with Police Scotland	18/11/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Reading stabbings: Man admits knife murders of three victims	11/11/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Social media data needed for 'harm' research, say doctors	17/01/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: The winners: The 2020 Russell Prize for best writing	22/12/2020	Harm and Offence	3

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 27 February and 30 April 2021

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	01/03/2021	Impartiality	1
BBC Earth Website: Is your toddler really smarter than a chimpanzee?	20/03/2021	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News app	03/06/2020	Complaints handling	1
BBC News app	22/07/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News app	19/04/2021	Impartiality	1
BBC News Somerset	12/03/2019	Privacy	1
BBC News website	15/06/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	03/02/2021	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	01/03/2021	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	21/03/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website	31/03/2021	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	10/04/2021	Other	1
BBC News website	12/04/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: 12 things we learned from Meghan's Oprah interview	09/03/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: BBC receives 109,741 complaints over Prince Philip coverage Prince Philip: Coverage of royal death poses quandary for BBC	15/04/2021	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Covid vaccine: UK supply hit by India delivery delay	18/03/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Covid: Dominic Raab rejects CRG calls for lockdown easing date	14/02/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Covid: Fresh air 'key to safer classrooms'	05/03/2021	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: Covid: Teachers 'not at higher risk' of death than average	25/01/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Covid: Three in 10 care home staff in England not vaccinated	18/02/2021	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Covid-19 leaflets: How pandemic disinformation went offline	20/03/2021	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Covid-19: Dolly Parton marks vaccination with Jolene rewrite	03/03/2021	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Covid-19: The disinformation tactics used by China	08/04/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Daunte Wright shooting: Police resignations fail to ease unrest over death	14/04/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Derek Chauvin trial: Police restraint killed George Floyd, expert says	11/04/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: George Floyd death: Why US protests resonate in the UK	03/06/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: George Floyd: How the USA's history has shaped today's police brutality	05/06/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Hyde Park: Police attacks at anti-lockdown protest condemned	25/04/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Mayday: How the White Helmets and James Le Mesurier got pulled into a deadly battle for truth	27/02/2021	Harm and Offence	93
BBC News website: Prince Philip: An extraordinary man who led an extraordinary life	09/04/2021	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Religious group warns against LGBT+ conversion therapy ban	16/03/2021	Impartiality	18
BBC News website: Religious group warns against LGBT+ conversion therapy ban	17/03/2021	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Sarah Everard: Met Police chief will not resign over vigil scenes	13/03/2021	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Schools back 8 March in England with Covid tests taken at home	23/02/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Summer holidays abroad 'extremely unlikely'	20/03/2021	Accuracy	1

BBC online material	Date¹	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website: When a third of Europe's population was lost, wealth concentrated into tiny groups. Could Covid-19 trigger something similar?	05/07/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Why are there protests in Hong Kong? All the context you need	21/05/2020	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: 'Why I stopped hiding my scars'	13/08/2020	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Wilfried Zaha: West Midlands Police arrest boy, 12, over racist messages	12/07/2020	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: World Snooker Championship: Ronnie O'Sullivan beats Mark Joyce as fans return to Crucible	17/04/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC Radio 1 website: Watch the hilarious world premiere of Lewis Capaldi: The Musical	12/03/2021	Harm and Offence	1
BBC Sport website	22/03/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC Sport website	18/04/2021	Harm and Offence	1
BBC Sport website: BBC Women's Sport Survey: How decisions on abortion and starting a family affect female athletes	15/08/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC Sport website: Have Your Say	21/03/2021	Harm and Offence	1
BBC website	04/03/2020	Accuracy	1
BBC website: Apply for a Blue Peter Green Badge	31/03/2021	Children and Young People as Contributors	1
BBC website: Dawn Butler: MP calls for 'system change' after police stop	09/08/2020	Accuracy	1
Covid-19: Vaccine rollout in England extends to 44-year-olds	26/04/2021	Accuracy	1
Oxford Covid vaccine 'safe and effective' study shows	28/04/2021	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 Teach website: KS2 PSHE: The Big Talk	08/02/2021	1
BBC World Service	27/11/2019	1
Facebook	17/04/2021	1
Reddit	03/03/2021	1
Twitter	03/03/2021	1
Twitter	11/04/2021	1
YouTube	10/02/2021	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.