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# 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 material<sup>1</sup>. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 4 January and 28 February 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 <sup>1</sup> | Category         | Number of complaints |
|--|-------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| BBC News website: A guide to Labour Party anti-Semitism claims                         | 06/07/2019        | Accuracy         | 1                    |
| BBC News website: BBC apologises for using wrong Remembrance Sunday clip               | 11/11/2019        | Harm and Offence | 1                    |
| BBC News website: Boris Johnson's referral to watchdog 'politically motivated' – No 10 | 28/09/2019        | Impartiality     | 1                    |

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<sup>1</sup> 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 4 January and 28 February 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 <sup>1</sup> | Category            | Number of complaints |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| BBC News website  | 24/10/2019        | Impartiality        | 1                    |
| BBC News website  | 31/10/2019        | Impartiality        | 1                    |
| BBC News website  | 01/11/2019        | Impartiality        | 1                    |
| BBC News website  | 04/11/2019        | Accuracy            | 1                    |
| BBC News website  | 06/11/2019        | Accuracy            | 1                    |
| BBC News website  | 20/11/2019        | Accuracy            | 1                    |
| BBC News website  | 30/11/2019        | Complaints handling | 1                    |
| BBC News website  | n/a               | Impartiality        | 1                    |
| BBC News website: Birmingham mosque attacks: Shia Muslim jailed                     | 28/11/2019        | Harm and Offence    | 1                    |
| BBC News website: Brexit: 'I don't want to struggle with the mortgage'              | 16/08/2019        | Impartiality        | 1                    |
| BBC News website: Cafe politics in coal country                                     | 12/12/2019        | Accuracy            | 1                    |
| BBC News website: Climate change: 'Clear and unequivocal' emergency, say scientists | 06/11/2019        | Accuracy            | 1                    |
| BBC News website: Five things everyone with a vagina should know about              | 07/11/2019        | Harm and Offence    | 1                    |
| BBC News website: Five things everyone with a vagina should know about              | 07/11/2019        | Sex                 | 1                    |
| BBC News website: Iran plane crash: 'More time needed for investigation' – Ukraine  | 10/01/2020        | Accuracy            | 1                    |
| BBC News website: Poland nationalists hold huge Warsaw march                        | 11/11/2019        | Impartiality        | 1                    |

<sup>1</sup> 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.

| <b>BBC online material</b>   | <b>Date<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>Category</b>  | <b>Number of complaints</b> |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| BBC News website: Richard Huckle stabbed to death at Full Sutton Prison                    | 14/10/2019              | Accuracy         | 1                           |
| BBC News website: Spanish anger as five men acquitted of gang-raping teenager              | 04/11/2019              | Harm and Offence | 1                           |
| BBC News website: The St Petersburg vegans cooking up a revolution                         | 03/11/2019              | Impartiality     | 1                           |
| BBC News website: The women paid to cry at the funerals of strangers                       | 01/07/2018              | Fairness         | 1                           |
| BBC News website: US election 2020: Five charts on the Democratic race to take on Trump    | 05/11/2019              | Harm and Offence | 1                           |
| BBC Sport website: Marieke Vervoort: Paralympian ends life through euthanasia at age of 40 | 23/10/2019              | Harm and Offence | 1                           |
| Programming  | 01/02/2020              | 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.

| <b>BBC online material</b> | <b>Date<sup>2</sup></b> | <b>Number of complaints</b> |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Twitter                    | 30/10/2019              | 1                           |
| Twitter                    | 19/11/2019              | 1                           |
| Twitter                    | 31/01/2020              | 1                           |
| Twitter                    | 08/02/2020              | 1                           |

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

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<sup>2</sup> 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.