
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 29 February and 17 April 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 | Date¹ | Category | Number of complaints |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| BBC News website: Dan Carden: Labour shadow minister denies anti-Semitic lyric | 09/11/2019 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: General election 2019: Ads are 'indecent, dishonest and untruthful' | 12/12/2019 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC News website: HMRC drops further £5m from Rangers tax claim | 10/12/2019 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC News website: Hundreds of temperature records broken over summer | 10/10/2019 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: Unison backs call for second independence referendum | 01/02/2020 | Impartiality | 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 29 February and 17 April 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 iPlayer podcasts | 02/03/2020 | Complaints handling | 1 |
| BBC News app | 26/02/2020 | Harm and Offence | 1 |
| BBC News Northern Ireland | 03/04/2020 | Harm and Offence | 1 |
| BBC News website | 29/11/2019 | Complaints handling | 1 |
| BBC News website | 01/12/2019 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website | 04/12/2019 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website | 06/12/2019 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC News website | 07/03/2020 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: UK results: Conservatives win majority | 08/12/2019 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: China needs to show Taiwan respect, says president | 14/02/2020 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: Coronavirus death rate: What are the chances of dying? | 04/03/2020 | Harm and Offence | 1 |
| BBC News website: Does profiling make sense – or is it unfair? | 22/02/2020 | Harm and Offence | 1 |
| BBC News website: General election 2019: What to look out for on LGBT issues | 29/11/2019 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: Have Your Say | 02/04/2020 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: India | 05/03/2020 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: Julian Assange: Sweden drops rape investigation | 19/11/2019 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC News website: Julian Assange: Sweden drops rape investigation | 20/11/2019 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC News website: Nancy Astor: Theresa May unveils statue for pioneering female MP | 28/11/2019 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: Newsbeat | 10/12/2019 | Impartiality | 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: Samoa measles: Unvaccinated families told to hang red flag on door | 04/12/2019 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC website / BBC YouTube | 24/11/2019 | Sex | 1 |
| BBC website: How could the Oscars ignore these brilliant women directors? | 13/01/2020 | Harm and Offence | 2 |

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 |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Twitter | 08/11/2019 | 1 |
| Twitter | 09/12/2019 | 1 |
| Twitter | 10/12/2019 | 1 |
| Twitter | 20/01/2020 | 1 |

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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.