

Reference: 01477301

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Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning Ofcom's Standards team composition and function. Your request was received on 13 July 2022 and we have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Your request

You asked for:

The total number of people involved in Ofcom's Standards team. do not wish to know the number of administration staff within this department, just the total number of staff reflecting on, taking a view of broadcast and on line material.

Are members of the Standards team set up in groups which look at specific areas?

To explain myself, are there a specific number of teams looking at particular groups such as the BBC, commercial TV, on line material etc?

If the way your Standards team operates means that there are groups looking at specific areas, I would like to know the number of groups and the number of individuals within these groups looking specifically at BBC TV, BBC wireless and BBC on line material.

Our response

Ofcom's Standards and Audience Protection (SAP) Team is comprised of approximately 40 members (FTE equivalent) at various levels of seniority ranging from Standards Executives to Senior Management. The team as a whole carries out a range of programmatic enforcement and policy work related to all areas of programme standards under the Ofcom Broadcasting Code and rules for on demand programme services¹. The SAP Team's remit in online material, which you have also referenced, is limited to our role regulating BBC online material².

¹ See: The Ofcom Broadcasting Code (with the Cross-promotion Code and the On Demand Programme Service Rules)
<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-codes/broadcast-code>

² See: Procedures for handling complaints relating to BBC online material:
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/101893/bbc-online-procedures.pdf

In general, due to the varied and diverse range of our work, team members will be tackling work across a range of areas. We do have specific core sub-teams within the larger SAP Team specialising in complaints related to: Section 3 (Incitement and hate speech) of the Code (comprising four people); Sections 7 and 8 (Fairness and Privacy) of the Code (comprising six people); and Sections 9 and 10 (commercial references) of the Code (comprising six people).

However, it is worth noting that the SAP Team has to deal with a wide and varied range of cases which has vastly increased in the last few years. For example, in 2020/21 we received 142,660 complaints, an increase of over 300% from the 34,545 complaints we received in 2019/20. This has required us to be agile in our deployment of resources to ensure we are tackling the most harmful content as a priority.

I hope this information is helpful. If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Zach Westbrook

If you are unhappy with the response you have received in relation to your request for information and/or consider that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom.

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 responding to 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 information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

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. Further information about this, and the internal review process can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office [here](#). Alternatively, the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF