

Reference: 02111709

Information Requests
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17 December 2025

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request concerning instances where Ofcom overruled BBC complaint outcomes.

We received this request on 24 November 2025 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the 'FOI Act').

Background

By way of background, complaints about broadcast standards are carefully assessed under Ofcom's [Broadcasting Code](#) ("the Code") which sets standards for programme content that all Ofcom licensees must follow. Individual complaints received by Ofcom are assigned to cases, and a case is opened when Ofcom is assessing a specific programme or issue and each case may consist of one or more complaints. In line with our published complaints [procedures](#), we review every complaint we receive to consider whether it raises potentially substantive issues under the Code which warrant investigation by Ofcom. If we consider that these standards may have been breached, we will investigate. You can find decisions about complaints we have considered in [Ofcom's Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#), published every fortnight on our website, with a separate [bulletin for BBC Online complaints](#) being published every two months.

For complaints about the BBC under the BBC procedures, Ofcom can normally only consider complaints about BBC programmes where the complainant has already complained to the BBC and the BBC has reached its final decision.

Your request & our response

1. *The number of occasions since 1 January 2020 where Ofcom:*

a) disagreed with the BBC's initial complaint response,

For complaints which the BBC has already upheld or partly upheld under the BBC First system but which we have decided do not raise substantive issues warranting investigation, Ofcom has published those outcomes in the [Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#) since April 2024. This data can be found for cases closed in Issues 496 and beyond and the Bulletin for BBC Online Material in Issues 46 and beyond.

Regarding complaints prior to April 2024, we are unable to provide this information as we consider that disclosure of this information is exempt under section 12 of the FOI Act. Section 12 of the FOI Act provides that we are not obliged to comply with a request for information if we estimate that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the "appropriate limit". The appropriate limit is set out in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations

2004 (the “Regulations”) and is, for Ofcom, £450. That sum is intended to cover the estimated costs involved in determining whether Ofcom holds the information requested, locating, retrieving and extracting the information from any document containing it. The Regulations provide that costs are to be estimated at a rate of £25 per person per hour, which equates to 18 hours of time.

The information we hold is not readily accessible and, given the volume of complaints about the BBC received since 2020, a considerable amount of time would be needed to manually locate, retrieve, identify and extract any relevant information. We estimate that this would take at least 18 hours and so the cost of complying with your request will exceed the appropriate limit under Freedom of Information regulations.

We may be able to consider a narrower request, such as a 6-month date range, however, please note that some exemptions may apply under the FOI Act including the cost limit mentioned above.

For your information, [Ofcom’s Annual reports on the BBC](#) include collated annual data on BBC Content Standards complaints, which may be of interest.

b) required the BBC to reconsider or reassess a complaint,

Ofcom would not require the BBC to reconsider its adjudication of a complaint. Rather, Ofcom would make an independent decision on a complaint matter and launch an investigation if we consider it raises substantive issues warranting investigation under our Broadcasting Code.

c) instructed the BBC to issue a correction, clarification, or amendment,

2 times.

d) issued a breach finding following an incorrect or incomplete BBC adjudication.

The [Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#) records all breach decisions under the “Look at Past Decisions” section, with it being possible to filter by BBC services. Adjudications of individual breach decisions in the Broadcast Bulletin and Bulletin for BBC Online Material will include detail on the BBC’s consideration of complaints.

2. Any aggregate log or reporting categories used internally to track these cases.

Ofcom’s internal categorisation of complaint outcomes reflects the range of outcomes for cases as reported in the Bulletins.

Yours sincerely,

Information Requests

Request an internal review

If you are unhappy with the response you have received to your request for information, or think that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you do, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will either uphold the original decision, or reverse or modify it.

If you would like to ask us to carry out an internal review, you should get in touch within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for us to complete our internal review, and the time it takes will depend on the complexity of the request. But we will try to complete the review within 20 working days (or no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases) and keep you informed of our progress. Please email the Information Requests team (information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) to request an internal review.

Taking it further

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our internal review, then you have the right to [complain to the Information Commissioner’s Office](#).