

Reference: 02281414

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

16 September 2026

Dear,

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning the portrayal or discussion of periods in media.

We received this request on 9 September 2026 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act").

Your request

"Under the Freedom of Information Act, I'd like to request any data you hold relating to complaints about the portrayal or discussion of periods and menstruation in media.

Most importantly, I'd like to know the number of complaints received by Ofcom relating to periods, menstruation, or menstrual products shown, discussed, or referenced in television programmes or broadcasts in each calendar year from 2015 to 2025.

Please also provide (where available):

A breakdown of the type of media the complaint related to, e.g. TV programmes, films, adverts or other broadcasts.

The programme, broadcast or advertisement the complaint related to

A copy of the complaints themselves, or the wording/content of the complaints, would be invaluable. If individual complaints cannot be disclosed, a sample of complaints or anonymised extracts would be greatly appreciated."

Our response

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.

We log complaints on our complaints database by category of the complaint issue (with reference to the rules in our broadcasting codes). There is no specific category used exclusively to categorise complaints in the area you cited. To perform a manual search of all complaints for the years you specified would take a considerable amount of time, which we estimate would exceed the appropriate 18 hour limit under Freedom of Information regulations¹. However, we have been able to perform a keyword search for any complaints containing the words “period(s)”, “menstruation”, or “menstrual” to identify any which may have referred to the subject you are interested in and have provided a table of those complaints. Due to record retention policies, we only hold data for 5 years, therefore we do not hold data back to 2015.

Year	Programme	Service	Transmission or Accessed Date	Issues	Outcomes
2020	The Julia Hartley-Brewer Breakfast Show	Talk Radio	12/03/2020	Transgender discrimination/offence	Not Pursued
2020	The Julia Hartley-Brewer Breakfast Show	Talk Radio	12/03/2020	Transgender discrimination/offence	Not Pursued
2020	You've Been Framed! A to Z of Growing Up	ITV2	07/06/2020	Generally accepted standards	Not pursued
2020	ITV Black Voices promotion	ITV	20/07/2020	Race discrimination/offence	Not Pursued
2020	100 Vaginas	Channel 4	15/09/2020	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2020	100 Vaginas	Channel 4	15/09/2020	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2020	100 Vaginas	Channel 4	15/09/2020	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2020	Loose Women	ITV	01/10/2020	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2020	This Morning	ITV	19/10/2020	Materially misleading	Not Pursued

¹ Section 12 of the FoI Act provides that a public authority is not obliged to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates 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, and is, for Ofcom, £450. That sum is intended to cover the estimated costs involved in determining whether Ofcom holds the information requested, identifying, 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.

2020	Loose Women	ITV	07/12/2020	Scheduling	Not Pursued
2021	The Julia Hartley-Brewer Breakfast Show	Talk Radio	11/01/2021	Transgender discrimination/offence	Not Pursued
2021	This Morning	ITV	26/02/2021	Materially misleading	Not Pursued
2021	This Morning	ITV	26/02/2021	Materially misleading	Not Pursued
2021	This Morning	ITV	26/02/2021	Materially misleading	Not Pursued
2021	ITV News Tyne Tees	ITV Tyne Tees	11/05/2021	Due accuracy	Not Pursued
2021	ITV News Westcountry	ITV Westcountry	11/05/2021	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2021	Advertisement	ITV	09/06/2021	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2021	Lorraine	ITV	12/07/2021	Materially misleading	Not Pursued
2021	Lorraine	ITV	12/07/2021	Materially misleading	Not Pursued
2021	Lorraine	ITV	12/07/2021	Materially misleading	Not Pursued
2021	GB News with Tom Harwood	GB News	29/07/2021	Materially misleading	Not Pursued
2021	Jeremy Vine	Channel 5	03/12/2021	Materially misleading	Not Pursued
2021	Lorraine	ITV	08/12/2021	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2022	Jeremy Vine	Channel 5	24/01/2022	Materially misleading	Not Pursued
2022	Advertisement	ITV	10/07/2022	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2022	Halo / La Brea	Channel 5	22/06/2022	Other	Not Pursued
2022	Advertisements	ITV	21/09/2022	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2022	Mark Steyn	GB News	04/10/2022	Materially misleading	Refer for Investigation
2022	Mark Steyn	GB News	04/10/2022	Materially misleading	Refer for Investigation
2022	Mark Steyn	GB News	04/10/2022	Materially misleading	Refer for Investigation
2022	This Morning	ITV	14/11/2022	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2022	This Morning	ITV	14/11/2022	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2022	This Morning	ITV	14/11/2022	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2023	Loose Women	ITV	25/07/2022	Materially misleading	Not Pursued

2023	Advertisement	5 USA	14/02/2023	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2023	Emmerdale	ITV1	23/02/2023	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2023	Advertisement	Channel 5	25/02/2023	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2023	Murder Comes To Town	Quest Red	07/03/2023	Offensive language	Not Pursued
2023	Advertisement	Sky News	21/03/2023	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2023	Advertisement	CBS Reality	03/04/2023	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2023	Naked Education	Channel 4	04/04/2023	Nudity	Not Pursued
2023	Advertisement	Quest	28/04/2023	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2023	Change Climate Season (trailer)	Channel 4 / E4 / 4Seven / Film4 / More4		Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2023	Change Climate Season (trailer)	Channel 4 / E4 / 4Seven / Film4 / More4		Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Julia Hartley-Brewer	TalkTV	03/01/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not pursued
2024	Advertisement	n/a	21/02/2024	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2024	Electoral Dysfunction podcast promotion	Sky News		Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Advertisement	ITV1	10/04/2024	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2024	Advertisements	ITV1	19/06/2024	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	15/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	15/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	15/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	15/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	15/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued

2024	Big Brother	ITV2	15/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	The 1% Club	ITV1	18/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	22/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	22/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	22/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	22/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	22/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	22/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	22/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	22/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	22/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	27/10/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother: Late And Live	ITV2	03/11/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2024	Big Brother	ITV2	10/11/2024	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2025	Advertisement	ITV2	30/01/2025	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2025	Advertisement	ITV1	04/02/2025	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2025	Advertisement	Channel 4	09/03/2025	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2025	Advertisements	Channel 4	25/03/2025	Advertising content	Refer to ASA
2025	Celebrity Big Brother: Late and Live	ITV2	16/04/2025	Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued
2025	Jane Garvey and Fi Glover	Times Radio	30/04/2025	Scheduling	Not Pursued
2025	GB News	GB News		Generally accepted standards	Not Pursued

Regarding advertising complaints, while Ofcom considers complaints about programming, sponsorship credits and long-form advertising (such as interactive adult and psychic television services), complaints about the content of spot advertising (as featured in commercial breaks on television or radio) and shopping channels are handled by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) on Ofcom's behalf, and we therefore do not record details of specific advertisements that we receive complaints about, which are referred to the ASA.

We are unable to disclose the text of any of the complaints as this information is exempt under section 44(1) of the FOI Act. Section 44(1) of the FOI Act provides that information is exempt from disclosure if its disclosure is prohibited by or under any enactment. The enactment that prohibits the disclosure of this information is section 393(1) of the Communications Act 2003 ("the Communications Act"). Under this section, we are prohibited from disclosing information with respect to a particular business that has been obtained in the exercise of our regulatory functions, unless that business consents or one of the statutory gateways under section 393(2) of the Communications Act is met, neither of which apply here. Section 44 of the FOI Act is an absolute exemption and therefore is not subject to the public interest test.

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](#).