
Ofcom Bulletin for complaints about BBC online material

Issue number: 14

Date: 21 October 2019

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 17 August 2019 and 11 October 2019

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 ¹	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website: Q&A: The Irish Border Brexit Backstop and BBC News website: Reality Check: What do Brexit backstop proposals mean?	Various	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Gaza conflict: Rocket barrage and Israeli strikes intensify	04/05/2019	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Trump UK visit: Protesters mix humour and expletives to make their point	05/06/2019	Accuracy	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 17 August 2019 and 11 October 2019

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 ²	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website	02/10/2018	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	21/07/2019	Accuracy	1
BBC News website	10/08/2019	Impartiality	1
BBC News website	22/08/2019	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: 'My mum didn't vaccinate me – this is what happened next'	09/07/2019	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Boris Johnson confronted on east London hospital visit	18/09/2019	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Brexit: Caroline Lucas criticised over all-female cabinet plan	12/08/2019	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Brexit: Operation Yellowhammer no-deal document published BBC News website: No-deal Brexit would push UK debt to 50-year high, says think tank	08/10/2019	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Clean electricity overtaking fossil fuels in Britain	21/06/2019	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Climate change: Current warming 'unparalleled' in 2,000 years	24/07/2019	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Congresswomen hit back after Trump's tweets branded racist	17/07/2019	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Court to consider if PM can be jailed over no-deal	04/10/2019	Impartiality	1

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.

BBC online material	Date²	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website: Demonstrations in Egypt: Protesters go out for a second day in the city of Suez	22/09/2019	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: 'Gaukeard' squad joins fight against no-deal Brexit	18/07/2019	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Man hurt in brawl during funeral at Glasgow mosque	30/08/2019	Harm and Offence, other	1
BBC News website: Prorogation: How can the government suspend Parliament?	02/09/2019	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Q&A: The Irish Border Brexit Backstop BBC News website: Reality Check: What do Brexit backstop proposals mean?	Various	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Texas shooting rampage leaves seven dead	01/09/2019	Harm and Offence, other	1
BBC News website: The Kenyan school that was once a British detention camp	27/08/2019	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Trump impeachment inquiry: Whistleblower 'is CIA officer'	27/09/2019	Impartiality	1
BBC Sport website	30/06/2019	Content Information	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.

BBC online material	Date³	Number of complaints
BBC Politics on Twitter	27/07/2019	1
Laura Kuenssberg on Twitter	18/09/2019	1
Nick Robinson on Twitter	26/02/2019	1

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

³ 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.