
Ofcom Bulletin for complaints about BBC online material

Issue number: 30

Date: 4 April 2022

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 met the required 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 standards, 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](#).

1. Complaints assessed, not accepted

Closed between 29 January 2022 and 25 March 2022

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 ²	Category	Number of complaints
BBC News website: Air Quality Index: Delhi air turns toxic after Diwali fireworks	31/12/2021	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Bristol University: Professor David Miller sacked over Israel comments	02/10/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Covid in Scotland: Peacetime excess deaths highest since 1891	24/01/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Covid: Posts claiming only 17,000 died of virus 'factually incorrect'	26/01/2022	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: First person to get Covid vaccine is happy to inspire others	08/12/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: 'Why is Israel demolishing homes in East Jerusalem?'	16/08/2021	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.

2. BBC First

Complaints closed between 29 January 2022 and 25 March 2022

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 ³	Category	Number of Complaints
BBC News app	08/02/2022	Impartiality	1
BBC News style guide	19/11/2021	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website	21/02/2022	Privacy	1
BBC News website: Anti-Semitism surge deeply disturbing - Robert Jenrick	17/05/2021	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: Audit Scotland: Watchdog concern over where £5bn Covid funds went	17/03/2022	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Coronavirus: Tory MP Sir Desmond Swayne refuses to apologise over Covid claims	03/02/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Covid in Scotland: Mask rules will stay in force until April	16/03/2022	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Covid: Posts claiming only 17,000 died of virus 'factually incorrect'	29/01/2022	Accuracy	2
BBC News website: Covid: What's life like for unvaccinated people in the UK?	18/02/2022	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Live updates	27/02/2022	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Pharmacists say abuse from customers is increasing	19/02/2022	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Ros Atkins On... PM's Starmer Savile claim	08/02/2022	Accuracy	1

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.

BBC online material	Date³	Category	Number of Complaints
BBC News website: Tearful Adele postpones entire Las Vegas residency	22/01/2022	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Ukraine conflict: The women making Molotov cocktails to defend their city	27/02/2022	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Ukraine war has put the brakes on efforts to remove Boris Johnson - for now	07/03/2022	Harm and Offence	1
BBC News website: Ukraine: Are arms shipments from the West making a difference?	08/03/2022	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: 'We're being pressured into sex by some trans women'	26/10/2021	Harm and Offence	2
BBC News website: 'We're being pressured into sex by some trans women'	28/01/2022	Impartiality	1
BBC News website: What happens if I don't get the Covid vaccine?	12/03/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: When should I take a Covid test now?	17/01/2022	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Why do migrants leave France and try to cross the English Channel?	26/11/2021	Accuracy	1
BBC News website: Why the world is waging economic war on Russia	28/02/2022	Accuracy	1
BBC Sport website	Various	Harm and Offence	1

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

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	Date⁴	Number of complaints
n/a	25/01/2022	1

⁴ 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.

Complaints accepted

Ofcom has considered and accepted a complaint about the following material and is now preparing an Opinion in this case.

BBC online material
BBC News website: Oxford Street: Images issued after men filmed spitting at Jews on bus