
Ofcom Bulletin for complaints about BBC online material

Issue number: 31

Date: 23 May 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 26 March 2022 and 13 May 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 Style guide | 01/10/2021 | Harm and Offence | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'As it happened: UK Covid cases hit highest daily total since January' | 10/12/2021 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'Beauticians breaking the law on underage lip fillers' | 14/12/2021 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'Bristol patient in hotel left for week without nurse' | 24/01/2022 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'Foreign aid: Gates and others to partially cover UK aid cuts' | 11/07/2021 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'India and Pakistan: The students in jail for praising the wrong cricket team' | 18/12/2021 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'Man damages BBC headquarters statue with hammer' | 12/01/2022 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'Mourid Barghouti: Leading Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti dies aged 76' | 14/02/2021 | 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 26 March 2022 and 13 May 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 red button | 26/08/2020 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'Al Jazeera reporter killed during Israeli raid in West Bank' | 11/05/2022 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'Balconies were blown off buildings' in Beirut' | 04/08/2020 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'DJ Tim Westwood accused of sexual misconduct' | 26/04/2022 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'Homes for Ukraine: Robert Jenrick takes in Ukrainian refugee family' | 15/04/2022 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'Households cancel streaming services to cut costs, report says' | 20/04/2022 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'NI Election 2022: DUP to block Stormont Speaker over Protocol' | 13/05/2022 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'Puberty blockers: Parents' warning as ruling challenged' | 22/12/2020 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC News website: Sabita Thanwani killing: Family pay tribute to 'irreplaceable angel' | 21/03/2022 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC News website: Sabita Thanwani killing: Family pay tribute to 'irreplaceable angel' | 23/03/2022 | 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.

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|--|------------|--------------|---|
| BBC News website: Vitamin D: The truth about an alleged Covid 'cover-up' | 05/04/2021 | Accuracy | 1 |
| BBC News website: 'We're being pressured into sex by some trans women' | 26/10/2021 | Accuracy | 2 |
| BBC News website: 'We're being pressured into sex by some trans women' | 27/10/2021 | Impartiality | 1 |
| BBC Sounds | 28/03/2022 | Other | 1 |
| BBC Sports website: 'Formula 1 comments page' | 24/04/2022 | Other | 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 | Date ⁴ | Number of complaints |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|
| BBC News website: 'Plymouth shooting: Suspected gunman and five others die' | 13/08/2021 | 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.