

Reference: 01579287

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

3 April 2023

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning programmes broadcast from Northern Ireland. Your request was received on 9 March 2023 and we have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the “FOI Act”).

Your request

I would like the annual figures from January 2019 to January 2023.

The number of complaints about programmes broadcast exclusively from Northern Ireland.

The number of complaints about programmes broadcast exclusively from Northern Ireland related to news coverage of sexual offences.

Our response

Before responding to your question, we would like to provide some background information on Ofcom’s complaints procedures and reporting, and our remit over the BBC.

Complaints about Ofcom licensed services are handled in line with our published procedures for handling complaints, investigations and sanctions on TV, radio and video-on-demand services^[1].

Ofcom assesses every complaint it receives. Based on an initial assessment of the complaint and a consideration of the related content, Ofcom will consider whether there may have been a breach of the Broadcasting Code (or other Ofcom codes or licence conditions). In cases where Ofcom considers there may have been a breach, it will launch an investigation. The possible outcomes of an investigation are that we judge an issue is **in breach**, **resolved** or **not in breach** of our rules.

Ofcom’s Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin, published every fortnight on our website, includes decisions about the complaints we have considered. The Bulletin covers a range of cases, including those which Ofcom has escalated for full investigation, and those which, after careful assessment, Ofcom has decided not to pursue because they did not raise issues warranting investigation. The Bulletins can be accessed via the following link to our website: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/bulletins/broadcast-bulletins>

For complaints about the BBC, as outlined in our published procedures^[2] for investigating breaches of content standards on BBC broadcasting services, Ofcom can normally only consider complaints where the complainant has already complained to the BBC and the BBC has reached its final decision.

[1] See: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/guidance/procedures>

[2] See: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0002/100100/Procedures-for-investigating-breaches-of-content-standards-on-BBC-broadcasting-services-and-BBC-on-demand-programme-services.pdf

The number of complaints about programmes broadcast exclusively from Northern Ireland.

Calendar Year	Number of complaints
2019	20
2020	33
2021	81
2022	37

The number of complaints about programmes broadcast exclusively from Northern Ireland related to news coverage of sexual offences.

We have carried out a search of the complaints listed above, and two complaints (in 2019 and 2022) related to news coverage of sexual offences.

If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Information Requests

If you are unhappy with the response you have received in relation to your request for information and/or consider that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter**. There is no statutory deadline for responding to internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Further information about this, and the internal review process can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office [here](#). Alternatively, the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF