

Reference: 02112737

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

18 December 2025

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning BBC complaints and BBC First.

We received this request on 25 November 2025 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the 'FOI Act').

Background

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, with a separate [bulletin for BBC Online complaints](#) being published every two months.

For complaints about the BBC, under the BBC procedures, Ofcom can normally only consider complaints about BBC programmes where the complainant has already complained to the BBC, and the BBC has reached its final decision. Ofcom may, in exceptional circumstances, intervene at an earlier stage to handle and resolve a complaint which has not been resolved by the BBC – further details where such circumstances may apply are set out in paragraph 1.18 of our [procedures](#).

Your request & our response

1. *The number of complaints relating to BBC content received since 1 January 2020 which Ofcom:*
a) redirected back to the BBC without assessment,

Complaints about BBC Standards are handled as set out in our published [BBC Procedures](#). Complaints about BBC Online Material are considered in line with our [published procedures for handling complaints about BBC Online Material](#).

As outlined above, we review every complaint we receive and this includes those which come to us before completing the BBC's complaints process (in order to determine whether there are exceptional circumstances which would lead us to intervene at an earlier stage). Therefore, the number of complaints which are redirected back to the BBC without assessment is zero

- b) declined to investigate under the BBC First system,*
- c) closed at triage specifically due to BBC First requirements.*

The information you have requested for b) and c) is published in our Annual Reports and our Annual Reports on the BBC. These can be found on our website [here](#) and [here](#).

2. Any internal guidance, decision-making categories, or criteria used to determine when a BBC complaint is returned without review.

As detailed in the 'Background' section above, Ofcom's published procedures for handling complaints about BBC content explain that Ofcom can normally only consider complaints about BBC programmes where the complainant has already complained to the BBC, and the BBC has reached its final decision. Ofcom may, in exceptional circumstances, intervene at an earlier stage to handle and resolve a complaint which has not been resolved by the BBC and further details where such circumstances may apply are set out in paragraph 1.18 of our [procedures](#).

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](#).