

# Complaints Management Corporate Policy

## Why this Policy matters

Ensuring we handle complaints fairly, efficiently and transparently is crucial for maintaining audience trust, upholding our values, and continuously improving the quality of our content and services.

This Policy sets out our principles and core requirements for effectively managing editorial, general, TV licensing, and other types of complaints.

## Who this Policy applies to

This Policy applies to you if:

1. You work for, or represent, the BBC or one of its subsidiaries, and
2. You handle complaints related to BBC content, services, or operations, or if you oversee others handling complaints.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- employees, full-time or part-time
- those on a fixed term or temporary contract
- freelancers, contractors or consultants
- volunteers or interns

## Overview

We aim to resolve complaints satisfactorily at the earliest stage possible. Our complaints process is designed to be:

- Accessible and easy to understand
- Timely in acknowledging and responding to complaints
- Transparent in explaining our decisions
- Accountable with routes of appeal
- Focused on admitting faults and providing appropriate remedies

## Complaints process

### Stage 1a

1. A complainant submits a complaint via the BBC Complaints process, managed by the relevant BBC Complaints team.
2. The Complaints team acknowledge the complaint, investigate and give an initial response.

### Stage 1b

3. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the initial response, they can submit another complaint via the same process for another response.
4. The relevant Complaints team respond to the second complaint. They also:
  - a. give the complainant an option to escalate their complaint, or
  - b. close down the complaint with a right to appeal.

### Stage 2

5. The Executive Complaints Unit manage escalated complaints.

## **The essential things you must do or not do**

These high-level essential mandatory requirements are the most important for you to understand and follow to meet the Policy objectives.

In addition to these, there are detailed requirements and best practices outlined in supporting procedures and guidance, linked below. Read this information when you need to understand the detail.

If you have any concerns or conflicting priorities that prevent you following essential requirements, please discuss them with one of the people listed in the section under 'Where to go for help and exceptions'. Without an approved exception, breaches may put the BBC at risk and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, or termination of our relationship with you.

### **Initial response**

1. You must acknowledge all complaints within 10 working days of receipt.

### **Allocation of resources**

2. To consider and respond to a complaint, you must be impartial and operationally independent from the subject of the complaint.

Second-stage complaints are handled by the Executive Complaints Unit.

3. You must assess and document the severity and risk level of the complaint and allocate investigative resources proportionately based on this assessment.

You must escalate critical complaints to senior management immediately.

Categorise the seriousness of the complaint based on an assessment of:

- The seriousness of the alleged breach of standards.
- The prominence of the content or service complained about.
- The level of external interest or potential for reputational harm.
- Any legal or regulatory compliance risk.

The Complaints team have infrastructure in place to sift out serious and urgent complaints.

## Investigation

4. You must consider complaints about content against the standards set out in the Editorial Guidelines.

Identify where the content complied with, or breached, the relevant guidelines.

5. You must maintain confidentiality around complaint investigations and protect the personal data of the complainant.

Only share complaint details with those who need to know for the purposes of the investigation.

You may read more information on [handling personal information](#), as well as the Data Protection Corporate Policy.

## Conclusion

6. You must communicate decisions clearly to the complainant in writing, explaining the reasons for the finding and any remedial actions.

Aim to respond substantively:

- to stage 1a complaints within 10 working days.
- to stage 1b complaints within 20 working days.

The Executive Complaints Team respond to stage 2 complaints within 20 working days, or up to 35 days for those complaints that require longer investigation.

Let the complainant know if you need more time owing to the complexity of the complaint and give them an updated target date.

Include the key points raised, corrections or clarifications of fact, and information on how to escalate the complaint is dissatisfied.

For complaints about editorial issues, demonstrate how the complaint was considered against the Editorial Guidelines.