



Department
for Culture,
Media & Sport

Updates to the BBC Framework Agreement

December 2025

CP 1460



Department for Culture, Media and Sport

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Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport
by Command of His Majesty

December 2025

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An Agreement Between His Majesty’s Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the British Broadcasting Corporation

THIS DEED is made on 16 December 2025

BETWEEN:

1. HIS MAJESTY’S SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT (“the Secretary of State”) and
2. THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION whose chief office is at Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA (“the BBC”)

BACKGROUND

- By a deed made on 7 November 2016 and published in December 2016 as Cm 9366, the Secretary of State and the BBC entered into an agreement (“the 2016 Agreement”) which is a Framework Agreement for the purposes of the Royal Charter granted to the BBC and published as Cm 9365 in December 2016 (“the Charter”).
- The 2016 Agreement makes provision to complement the Charter.
- The 2016 Agreement was amended by a Framework Agreement made by deed on 26 May 2022 and published in May 2022 as CP 682.
- The Secretary of State and the BBC have now agreed to further amend the 2016 Agreement, to reflect the outcomes of the Mid-Term Review which was concluded in January 2024.
- The UK Government will continue to recognise and respect the editorial, creative and operational independence of the BBC, as set out in the Charter.
- The amendments implement specific recommendations of the Mid-Term Review:
 - To make changes to how complaints are governed by the BBC Board and to how complaints decisions are regulated by Ofcom;
 - To extend Ofcom’s regulatory responsibilities to specific elements of the BBC’s online public service material; and
 - To update the regulatory procedures regarding the competition and market impact of the introduction of new BBC services.

NOW in view of these considerations, **THIS DEED WITNESSES** that the Secretary of State and the BBC agree with one another as follows—

INTRODUCTION

1. Status of this Agreement and commencement

- (1) This is a Framework Agreement made for the purposes of the Charter and amends the Framework Agreement dated 7 November 2016 and published as Cm 9366 in December 2016 (“the 2016 Agreement”).
- (2) The 2016 Agreement was amended by a Framework Agreement made by deed on 26 May 2022 and published in May 2022 as CP 682.
- (3) References in this Framework Agreement to the “Amended 2016 Agreement” are to the 2016 Agreement as amended as described in paragraph (2).
- (4) The provisions of this Framework Agreement will take effect on the date it is made, except as specified in clause 16.

AMENDMENTS TO THE 2016 AGREEMENT

2. Amendments

- (1) Subject to paragraph (2), the Amended 2016 Agreement is amended in accordance with clauses 3 to 16 of this Agreement.
- (2) The matters set out in this Agreement are subject to the making of any notification, the securing of any regulatory approval, clearance or exemption, and the enactment of any legislative changes which are necessary in order to enable their implementation (the “enabling measures”); and the Secretary of State will seek to secure, and the BBC will support the securing of, the enabling measures.

Public Online Material and Complaints

3. Procedures for handling complaints

In clause 56 of the Amended 2016 Agreement, in paragraph (2), after “paragraph 3” insert “or paragraph 3A”.

4. Consideration of complaints by Ofcom

In clause 57 of the Amended 2016 Agreement, after paragraph (4) insert—

- “(5) Ofcom must review a representative sample of all relevant complaints that—
- (a) have been resolved by the BBC under the procedures established under clause 56(2) and (4); and
 - (b) have not been referred to Ofcom under clause 57(1),

and report annually on the outcome of their review. Ofcom’s review will consider the relevant complaints against whether the BBC has observed the

content standards referred to in paragraphs 3(1) and (2) and the standards set under paragraph 3A(2) of Schedule 3.

- (6) In making provision under this clause for the handling and resolution of complaints about UK Public Online Material, Ofcom must (in addition to the matters set out in clause 57(4)) make provision that—
- (a) subject to paragraph (7), Ofcom must not accept a complaint referred to them, or intervene in a complaint, about UK Public Online Material unless—
 - (i) the complaint was initially made to the BBC within 30 working days of the date when the UK Public Online Material was first posted, and
 - (ii) the UK Public Online Material was posted after the commencement date, and
 - (b) in determining a complaint made about UK Public Online Material posted after the commencement date Ofcom may take into account material posted before that date, if they consider it appropriate to do so.
- (7) Ofcom may, in exceptional circumstances, intervene to handle and resolve a complaint which was not initially made to the BBC within 30 working days of the date when the UK Public Online Material was first posted.
- (8) In this clause and clause 60 (Online material)—
- (a) the “commencement date” is the date on which Ofcom publishes the first procedure (or procedures) under this clause which makes provision for the handling and resolution of complaints about UK Public Online Material, and
 - (b) “UK Public Online Material” has the meaning given in paragraph 3A(9) of Schedule 3.”.

5. Specified requirements

In clause 59 of the Amended 2016 Agreement, in paragraph (c), after “(editorial guidelines) and” insert “paragraph 3A(1) (standards in UK Public Online Material),”.

6. Online material

In clause 60 of the Amended 2016 Agreement, after paragraph (3) insert—

“(4) This clause shall—

- (a) cease to have effect in relation to UK Public Online Material posted after the commencement date, but
- (b) continue to have effect in relation to such Material posted before that date, although provisions about time limits for making complaints set out in relevant complaints procedures will continue to apply.”.

7. Standards in UK Public Online Material

In Schedule 3 to the Amended 2016 Agreement, after paragraph 3 insert—

“3A. Standards in UK Public Online Material

- (1) The BBC’s plans and guidelines under paragraph 2(1) (plans and guidelines designed to secure appropriate standards in the content of the UK Public Services) shall include provisions designed to secure appropriate standards in the content of UK Public Online Material.
- (2) It shall be the duty of Ofcom to set, and from time to time to review and revise, such standards for UK Public Online Material as appear to them best calculated to secure the standards objectives contained in section 319(2)(a), (b), (c) (including the special impartiality requirements in section 320) and (d) to (f) of the Communications Act 2003 (“the applicable standards objectives”).
- (3) Those standards must be contained (or referred to) in one or more codes.
- (4) In setting such standards, Ofcom must have regard, in particular, to—
 - (a) each of the matters contained in sections 319(4) of the Communications Act 2003 and the requirements contained in section 320 of that Act (with such adaptations as appear appropriate), to such extent as those matters appear to them to be relevant to the securing of the applicable standards objectives in relation to UK Public Online Material, and
 - (b) the objective that the standards it sets in relation to UK Public Online Material should be consistent with those set for broadcast television and radio services to such extent as appears to them to be appropriate.
- (5) In providing the UK Public Online Material, the BBC must observe the Fairness Code in force under section 107 of the Broadcasting Act 1996, so far as Ofcom determine the standards are relevant to the provision of that Online Material.
- (6) When setting such standards, Ofcom must take the following steps (in the following order)—
 - (a) consult the BBC about the standards Ofcom propose;
 - (b) prepare and publish a draft of the proposed code;
 - (c) consult the BBC and any other person Ofcom consider appropriate about the proposed code;
 - (d) set the standards for the provision of the UK Public Online Material, either in the terms proposed or with such modifications as Ofcom consider appropriate in the light of such consultation;
 - (e) publish the code containing (or referring to) those standards in such manner as they consider appropriate;
 - (f) send copies to the Secretary of State and to the BBC.
- (7) Ofcom shall keep under review and (if it appears to them appropriate) revise any code published under this paragraph. Paragraphs (3) to (6)

apply to a proposal by Ofcom to revise such a code as they apply when Ofcom initially set the standards in question.

- (8) The BBC must observe the standards set by Ofcom in relation to UK Public Online Material posted from the date on which they are published under paragraph (6)(e) above.
- (9) In this paragraph (but subject to paragraph (10)), “UK Public Online Material” means content provided as part of the UK Public Services by the BBC online and intended for users in the UK (or any part of the UK), including BBC-branded content on third party websites, applications and interfaces and any content included in—
 - (a) BBC news and sports websites;
 - (b) BBC apps on a smartphone, television or other device;
 - (c) any BBC social media account (including reposts by a BBC social media account of any content posted on any other social media account including that of any individual working for the BBC); or
 - (d) BBC educational and learning resources;

and references to “content” include written text and still or moving images, with or without sound, and content consisting of sound only.

- (10) UK Public Online Material does not include any content to the extent that it—
 - (a) is provided by the BBC—
 - (i) as part of the World Service; or
 - (ii) in an on-demand programme service (including BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds);
 - (b) consists of BBC corporate materials, including reports published by the BBC, speeches or statements by individuals working for the BBC and internal publications;
 - (c) is posted on a BBC message board or comments page;
 - (d) is user-generated and interactive content which is not directly linked to a UK Public service;
 - (e) is provided by any person other than the BBC as a dissociable section of a service provided by the BBC.
- (11) In paragraph (9)(c), “BBC social media account” means an account on any social media platform that relates to any BBC programme, service or genre and is branded and operated by the BBC as a BBC account (and, accordingly, does not include the personal social media accounts of any individual working for the BBC).”.

8. Editorial guidelines

In paragraph 2 of Schedule 3 to the Amended 2016 Agreement, after sub-paragraph (1A) insert—

- “(1B) As part of their broader duty under sub-paragraph (1), the Board must oversee the BBC complaints framework (see article 56 of the Charter) in its handling of complaints about editorial standards, and in particular must—
- (a) monitor the operation of the framework;
 - (b) assess its effectiveness in responding to complaints and helping maintain compliance with guidelines set under sub-paragraph (1); and
 - (c) ensure the framework at all times complies fully with the requirements of article 56(3) of the Charter.”.

Competition assessments

9. UK Public services

In clause 7 of the Amended 2016 Agreement, for the existing paragraph (7) substitute—

- “(7) For the purposes of this clause, a material change means any change to the UK Public Services which may have a significant adverse impact on fair and effective competition.”.

10. Material changes

(1) Clause 9 of the Amended 2016 Agreement is amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph (1), after “material change” insert “and, if so: decide that it is appropriate to carry out a competition assessment under clause 10; decide that it is appropriate to carry out a shorter (less than six months) assessment which considers the elements of clause 10(3)(a) to (d); or make a determination that the BBC may carry out the proposed change because no additional assessment is required. Ofcom must publish its reasoning for a decision or determination made under this clause”.

(3) In paragraph (2)—

- (a) after “material change” insert “and that it is appropriate to carry out a competition assessment under clause 10 or a shorter (less than six months) assessment which considers the elements of clause 10(3)(a) to (d)”; and
- (b) omit “having carried out a competition assessment under Clause 10 or a shorter (less than six months) assessment which considers the elements of clause 10(3)(a) to (d)”.

(4) In paragraph (3), after “material change” insert “or that they have made a determination that the BBC may carry out the proposed change because no additional assessment is required”.

- (5) In paragraph (4) for “notified” substitute “made a notification to” and for “as to whether it considers the proposed change is a material change” substitute “under either paragraph (2) or (3)”.

11. Competition assessment

In Clause 10 of the Amended 2016 Agreement, in paragraph (2), for “clause 9(2)” substitute “clause 9(1)”.

12. Determination by Ofcom

- (1) Clause 11 of the Amended 2016 Agreement is amended as follows.
- (2) In paragraph (1) after “material change” insert “and that an additional assessment is required”.
- (3) In paragraph (2), omit “under paragraph (1)(c) or (d) following a competition assessment under clause 10” and insert as two sub-paragraphs—
 “(a) under paragraph (1)(c) following consultation on the proposed modifications or conditions,
 (b) under paragraph (1)(d) following a competition assessment under clause 10”.

13. Material changes (non-service activities)

- (1) Clause 18 of the Amended 2016 Agreement is amended as follows.
- (2) In paragraph (1), after “material change” insert “and, if so: decide that it is appropriate to carry out a competition assessment under clause 19; decide that it is appropriate to carry out a shorter (less than six months) assessment which considers the elements of clause 19(3)(a) to (d); or make a determination that the BBC may carry out the proposed change because no additional assessment is required. Ofcom must publish its reasoning for a decision or determination made under this clause”.
- (3) In paragraph (2)—
 (a) after “material change” insert “and that it is appropriate to carry out a competition assessment under clause 19 or a shorter (less than six months) assessment which considers the elements of clause 19(3)(a) to (d)”; and
 (b) omit “having carried out a competition assessment under clause 19 or a shorter (less than six months) assessment which considers the elements of clauses 19(3)(a) to (d)”.
- (4) In paragraph (3) after “material change” insert “or that they have made a determination that the BBC may carry out the proposed change because no additional assessment is required”.

- (5) In paragraph (4) for “notified” substitute “made a notification to”; for “as to whether it considers the proposed change is a material change” substitute “under either paragraph (2) or (3)”.

14. Competition assessment

In clause 19 of the Amended 2016 Agreement, in paragraph (2), for “clause 18(2)” substitute “clause 18(1)”.

15. Determination by Ofcom

- (1) Clause 20 of the Amended 2016 Agreement is amended as follows.
- (2) In paragraph (1), after “material change”, insert “and that an additional assessment is required”.
- (3) In paragraph (2), omit “under paragraph (1)(c) or (d) following a competition assessment under clause 19” and insert as two sub-paragraphs–
 “(a) under paragraph(1)(c) following consultation on the proposed modifications or conditions,
 (c) under paragraph (1)(d) following a competition assessment under clause 19”.

16. Coming into force of amendments made by clauses 10 to 15

- (1) The amendments made by clauses 10 to 15 come into force at the end of the period of six months beginning with the date on which this Framework Agreement is made; and accordingly, changes in respect of which the BBC has begun a public interest test assessment under clause 8 of the Amended 2016 Agreement before that date shall be assessed by the BBC and Ofcom according to the provisions of the Amended 2016 Agreement, without the amendments made by this Agreement.

17. IN WITNESS of which the Secretary of State has set her hand and caused her seal to be affixed to this deed and the BBC has caused its corporate seal to be affixed to this deed.

<p>THE CORPORATE SEAL OF THE } SECRETARY OF STATE FOR } CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT } affixed to this deed is authenticated as the corporate} seal of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and} Sport by—}</p>	<p>Rt. Hon. Lisa Nandy, MP (L.S.)</p>
<p>THE CORPORATE SEAL OF THE } BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION is } affixed to this deed. }</p>	<p>Tim Davie CBE Director General Shamir Shah Chairman (L.S.)</p>

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