

Information, Misinformation and Disinformation at the BBC.



Marianna Spring: the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

The BBC is a UK public service broadcaster.

Everyone who wishes to watch any live TV in the UK or watch live on streaming services or using the IPlayer must have a BBC licence. Perhaps surprisingly, this applies whether you watch any BBC programmes or not. For example, if you only ever watch ITV or Channel 4 you will still need a BBC licence. In effect, this is a tax on watching TV.

The current BBC licence is £159.00 per year and it is a criminal offence to watch live TV without such licence.

Last year the BBC raised **£3.8 billion** in licence fees collected from approximately 25 million households.

The BBC Charter states that its mission is, *"To act in the public interest, serving all audiences through the provision of **impartial**, high quality and distinctive output and services which inform, educate and entertain"*.

Editorial Guidelines.

The BBC News Editorial Guidelines laudably state that, *"The BBC is committed to achieving due impartiality in all its output. Due impartiality usually involves more than a simple matter of balance between opposing viewpoints. We must be inclusive, considering the broad perspective and ensuring that the existence of a range of views is appropriately reflected"*.

Interestingly, the Editorial Guidelines continue by adding, “*Our audiences should not be able to tell from BBC output the personal opinions of our journalists or news and current affairs presenters on matters of public policy, political or industrial controversy or on controversial subjects in any other area*”.

The Guidelines also optimistically assert, “*Our audiences **trust us** and expect us to adhere to the highest editorial standards. In our journalism in particular, we seek to establish the truth and use the highest reporting standards to provide coverage that is fair and accurate*”.

BBC Verify

Apparently in pursuit of this balanced and trustworthy reporting, the BBC has established what it calls *BBC Verify*. This is a unit of 60 journalists who spend their employed time reality-checking, supposedly counteracting fake news and criticising opinions deemed unacceptable, all at the taxpayers’ expense; nothing less than self-appointed judge and jury on matters of fact.

Miss Marianna Spring is its ***Specialist Disinformation Correspondent***.

Disinformation is false information that is spread deliberately to deceive.

Misinformation is inaccurate or misleading information.

Examples of Miss Spring’s highly opinionated work include a Panorama programme called “*Vaccines: the Disinformation War*” and BBC radio programmes called “*The anti-vax files*” and “*Marianna in Conspiracy Land*”.

Disgracefully, what has become very apparent is that the BBC Disinformation Unit has pursued its own political agenda which includes seeking to counter those opposed to lockdown of society or coercive facemask wearing or who have raised legitimate concerns about the safety of Covid-19 vaccines and discriminatory vaccine mandates.

It is plainly important that those working in such a self-styled verification entity are themselves credible persons of integrity and scruple.

Unfortunately, 27 year old Miss Spring was herself thrust in to the media spotlight recently when an alarming story was reported in many newspapers alleging, with juicy irony, that she had blatantly lied on her employment *Curriculum Vitea* (CV).

Miss Spring reportedly applied to a US news site called **Coda Story** in 2018 asserting that she had worked alongside Sarah Rainsford, a BBC foreign correspondent, for the broadcaster’s coverage of the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

Natalie Antelava, Coda Story’s Editor in Chief, checked the claim and discovered that Miss Spring had apparently only met Miss Rainsford socially rather than having ever worked with her. Miss Spring then reportedly sent an apology email to the

Editor citing her own *"awful misjudgement"* and assuring Miss Antelava that she (Miss Spring) was a *"brilliant reporter"*.

Miss Spring is alleged to have confessed, *"I have only bumped into Sarah whilst she's working and chatted to her at various points but nothing more. Everything else on my CV is entirely true"*.

In reply, Miss Antelava pointedly responded, *"Telling me that you are a brilliant reporter who exercises integrity and honesty when you have literally demonstrated the opposite was a terrible idea"*.

We have respectfully written to the BBC Director-General Mr Tim Davie and asked that he investigate this serious matter and whether the allegation of lying is correct.

We are currently awaiting a substantive response.



"What truth is staring you in the face and what are you going to do about it Mr Davie?"

Should she be sacked?

If it is correct that Miss Spring did knowingly lie on her CV, some people might say that is not a problem. Just move on. Perhaps it makes her eminently suitable for reporting on falsehoods.

Other people are likely to view Miss Spring's position as Specialist Disinformation Correspondent as being completely untenable.

If Miss Spring's role was as a sports or entertainment presenter, the situation might be a little different. But as a so called Specialist Disinformation Correspondent, expressly focusing on veracity and accuracy, the very idea of her policing the internet for truth is clearly brought into disrepute.

Miss Spring has not yet publicly responded to the recent accusations of dishonesty and clearly she deserves the right of reply and for due process of a fair investigation to take place. We also make it clear that the integrity issue concerning Miss Spring relates only to the CV story, as reported, not in respect of any other personal matters. However, she has not thus far publicly denied the specific CV allegations and we await her comments with interest.

Miss Spring told the Sunday Times earlier this year that she had received more than 80% of all online abuse directed at BBC journalists during the first 6 months of 2023.

Obviously, any threatening or obscene messages are unacceptable but any individual carrying out a high profile public role at the taxpayers' expense and setting themselves up as an *arbiter of truth* should properly expect to be personally accountable and open to robust scrutiny.

So, will she be dismissed or re-assigned if the CV allegations are true? Probably not. Ranks will be closed. Mistakes glossed over. Management will look after their own. At best she may be sent on a *Truth Appreciation Re-education Programme*.

Growing mistrust of BBC

All that said, the much more important question arising from the current allegations is how a so-called politically neutral news organisation, funded largely by the British taxpayer, can be so blatantly unfair and partisan in its news reporting?

In other words, the real concern is not over the fate of one disingenuous journalist, but over the sinister and systemic bias so evident throughout BBC reporting.

Unfortunately, this is corrosive to public confidence and simply leads to people not believing what they see and hear in the news.

The Reuters Institute Annual News Report in 2022 disturbingly found that 46% of people surveyed said they often or sometimes deliberately *avoided* the news.

In 2018 75% of respondents reported trusting BBC news coverage. Just 4 years later, in 2022 this figure had dramatically fallen to **only 55%** (data supplied by Press Gazette).

The BBC's boast that "*Our audiences trust us and expect us to adhere to the highest editorial standards*", is therefore laughable and any misconduct by its presenters and journalists can only make matters worse.



The trusted face of TV news?

See below for link to the Daily Mail report on this story.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12493713/BBCs-disinformation-correspondent-chief-fact-checker-Marianna-Spring-accused-lying-CV-falsely-claiming-worked-Beeb-journalist-applying-job-Moscow.html>