



## Response to Culture, Media & Sport Select Committee Inquiry into Children's TV and video content in the UK

### About TAC

1. TAC represents independent TV production in Wales. With a value of £460m, our sector is a substantial component of the Welsh creative industries, and Cardiff alone has the third largest film and TV cluster in the UK. There are around 50 production companies in Wales, from sole traders to some of the leading players in the UK production industry, all providing economic, social and cultural benefits. Our members produce content for the BBC (including radio), ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5 and Sky as well as other commercial broadcasters and platforms. Our sector is responsible for almost all the content on S4C.

### Children's TV and video content in the UK

#### Who is commissioning and making original, high-quality, TV and video content for children and young audiences in the UK?

2. The **BBC** commissions content for CBeebies (0-6 years) and CBBC (7-12 years). **Channel 5** commissions programmes for its Milkshake service for children aged 2-5. **ITV** closed its linear CITV service and focusses on its ITVX Kids hub which features a mix of commissioned and acquired children's content.
3. While not always noted as a provider of children's TV, **S4C** commissions over 266 hours of children's content a year. Its service Cyw broadcasts 40 hours per week for 0-6 year-olds, and has a dedicated YouTube channel (CywS4C), Cyw app (CywTiwb) and a presence on other children's platforms, plus live events. S4C's Stwnsh strand provides programmes for 7-13 year-olds. Programmes for older teenage viewers include the drama Hafiach. S4C also has a children's news service, Newyddion Ni. S4C's commissioning supports a range of Welsh production companies, who then use their expertise to make children's content for the UK-wide PSBs and others, as well as exploring other options for creating content.
4. Overall, children's TV producers now have fewer commissioning options. **Sky** recently announced that it will cease commissioning children's TV content<sup>1</sup> in favour of an acquisitions-only strategy, representing a significant reduction in UK-originated children's programming.
5. PSB children's content also faces much competition. Ofcom's Public Service Media Review reported: *"Today's 4-6-year-olds spend a larger proportion of their in-home viewing on YouTube (27%) than they do on all PSB services combined (21%). These patterns intensify with children's age: 7-12-year-olds spend over a third of their in-home viewing time (35%) on YouTube and 13-*

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<sup>1</sup> [Fallon, Heather. Sky Kids halts commissioning. Broadcast, July 2025](#)

*15-year-olds spend nearly half (49%) on YouTube and TikTok” and that “the likelihood is that much of their viewing is not PSB content.”<sup>2</sup>*

6. Ofcom research shows that children’s broadcast TV viewing in Wales only amounted to 32 minutes a day in 2025, lower than the UK average of 36 minutes<sup>3</sup> and down from 39 minutes in 2024<sup>4</sup>.

- **How can they be best supported to continue to make more?**

#### Support for children’s content and its producers

7. Government policy needs to ensure that children’s TV is given high priority. The Media Act 2024 Act requires PSBs to ensure their content offering includes an appropriate range and quantity of original productions that: reflect the lives and concerns of children and young people in the UK; are educational in nature; and help them understand the world around them.
8. Ofcom oversees the PSBs to ensure they are meeting this requirement and it must do so effectively. While quotas for levels of this content are not required by legislation, this should be considered by Ofcom to prevent further reductions in UK PSB children’s content.
9. Elsewhere TAC co-hosts, with the UK Department of Business & Trade and S4C, events in Wales showcasing support to produce and sell programmes and formats internationally, plus explain the Audio-Visual Expenditure Credit (AVEC). Such Government support needs to be maintained and consideration given to growing international opportunities for UK children’s content producers.

#### Funding children’s content

10. It is crucial to bear in mind that £94.8m of S4C’s turnover of £96.6m comes from the **TV Licence Fee** (‘TVLF’)<sup>5</sup>. Public funding of the BBC and S4C needs to continue at least on current levels and takes into account inflationary increases. Within any future BBC/S4C funding mechanism, a minimum amount of spend on BBC and S4C children’s content could be ring-fenced.
11. The **Young Audiences Content Fund** (‘YACF’), a £44m three-year pilot scheme which ran from 2019-2023, provided development funding and/or a percentage of commissioning budget for additional children’s PSB content. The independent evaluation<sup>6</sup> of the Fund reported that the YACF:
  - Provided a strong return on investment, creating an estimated £329m in GVA from 2019-2027, not including development activity or positive impacts from tourism and merchandising.
  - Awarded production funding to six different Welsh production companies (15% of the total), with six Welsh companies (4%) also receiving development funding. 23% of the lead project producers were based in Wales.

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<sup>2</sup> [Transmission critical: the future of public service media. Ofcom July 2025, p19](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Media Nations 2025 - UK. Ofcom July 2025, p20](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Media Nations 2025 - Wales. Ofcom July 2025, p10](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25. S4C, July 2025, p99](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Young Audiences Content Fund Pilot: End-of-term evaluation. Bigger Picture Research December 2022, p79](#)

- Awarded 71% of UK production and development spend to projects located outside London and the South East, equivalent to 131,412 job days.
12. The YACF inspired various other development funds, for example from Creative Wales. We would welcome the Committee calling upon the Government to explore ways of re-opening the YACF, with funding perhaps being found from; Government departments such as Education and Health; the TVLF or its replacement; or the National Lottery.
  13. The UK's successful screen **tax credit regime** does of course include tax relief for animation and children's TV, with the latter now having the highest level of tax relief after being raised from 34% to 39% in 2024. Ofcom's PSM Review reports that PSBs have argued for the tax credit regime to go even further to support children's and other at-risk genres<sup>7</sup>.
  14. Rejoining the **Creative Europe Media programme** would access additional funding for culturally-distinctive content including children's and help with encouraging additional collaborations to make PSB children's content.

**How does the range of content and genres for children vary between that provided by public service media, subscription channels, and both short- and long-form video sharing platforms?**

15. The PSBs' services for young people construct safe environments by providing specific online services or timeslots on linear channels. In addition they are more likely to provide a wider range of genres.
  16. Content on platforms such as YouTube and Tiktok is less likely to be UK-originated. Subscription channels bring global franchises but less local focus. Short and long-form video sharing platforms flood children with content, but with little curation or public service value.
  17. While still covered by UK laws, subscription channels and short and long-form video sharing platforms have also not been through the same level of compliance to which PSB content is subject. News or current affairs programmes on non-PSB platforms may be less accurate.
- **Which audiences, by age or other characteristic, are currently being underserved?**
18. The most underserved audience is 10-12 years old, as broadcasters focus on the preschool audience (0-6) and younger primary (7-9). Children aged 10-12 tend to transition straight into teen or adult-targeted content, as there is a narrow offering of content that reflects their own stage of life. There is little UK-specific programming for 13-16 yr olds that reflects their interests, lives and identities. Dramas appealing to these audiences are available, for example on Channel 4 and S4C, however viewers at this age mostly consume content on YouTube, TikTok and global streaming platforms.
  19. Online service Freely, which features BBC, Channel 4, Channel 5 and ITV, plus some Sky and Warner Bros Discovery content, has just reported that "younger audiences are the early adopters of Freely, with the largest proportion of users aged 16-34 years"<sup>8</sup>. This is a potentially a positive indication of the ability to attract these audiences to PSB content on a familiar type of platform, especially as it is free. Additional investment in UK content for this age group, and

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<sup>7</sup> [Transmission critical: the future of public service media. Ofcom July 2025, p33](#)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.everyonetv.co.uk/news/press-release/freely-report-tv-users>. Accessed 4 September 2025

making it discoverable, can maintain and strengthen those audiences' relationship with PSB content. This will be beneficial to PSBs in general if they are to keep their brands in viewers' minds as they get older.

20. Overall, there is still too little on-screen representation of the UK's ethnic, linguistic and regional diversity which underlines the vital role of S4C, and highlights the urgent need for more content that reflects all of the UK's nations, regions and communities.
- **How can we increase the amount of news and factual programming made for children on TV and online?**
21. There are few age-appropriate factual and documentary programmes about current affairs, democracy, science and global issues. In the age of AI and less clarity regarding the origin of content, there is a need to ensure factual accuracy. Ofcom reports that children of all ages distrust the news content they see on platforms like TikTok, despite them being their main source of news<sup>9</sup>.
22. To grow children's news and factual output, a mix of funding, regulation, partnerships, and digital innovation is needed. If the YACF was reinstated or replaced there could be ring-fencing for children's factual and news content.
23. A Children's Media Foundation essay<sup>10</sup> by an academic and former children's content maker gives suggestions for addressing the lack of factual programming including: earmarked funding specifically for children's factual programming; incorporating an expanded definition of children's documentary which clearly includes emerging formats like shortform, hybrid and participatory content; and funding models and regulatory frameworks to better support diverse storytelling.
24. For the PSBs, Ofcom could look at whether quotas could be used to require minimum hours of children's factual and news across BBC, S4C, and other public service media.
25. Connecting young people to reporters and the reporting process could engage them more with reliable news. PSBs should create more opportunities for young people's active involvement in news and factual content. Schools could be incentivised to enter partnerships to co-fund and distribute factual content, alongside dedicated funding to encourage collaboration between PSB news brands, the education sector, and public institutions such as museums. These partnerships could for example create short-form online content and multi-platform factual resources for younger audiences.

### **Finding children's TV and video content online**

#### **How can it be made easier to find original, high-quality, TV and video content for children online?**

26. Ofcom is currently working on the implementation of Media Act prominence requirements. This will help factual/news content to be more easily discoverable on smart TVs, streaming menus, and online platforms. This must be used by PSBs to promote children's content as much as possible, including potentially combining to create an overall PSB children's hub. Ofcom's PSM review recommended that UK Government explores greater prominence for PSB content on

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<sup>9</sup> [Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report. Ofcom, May 2025, p44](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Terzopoulos, Tatyana. Children's documentary A call to preserve real stories. C21 Media, 26 Aug 2025](#)

YouTube, if necessary via legislation. TAC agrees and would like the Committee to support this approach.

27. With the streaming services helping to bring subtitled content into the mainstream, maintaining and growing UK indigenous minority language production across the UK could bring greater benefits, not least to children's content. To this end, TAC has been making the case for a lower threshold for the High-End TV tax relief element of the AVEC. Bringing the £1m threshold down to around £300k an hour for indigenous minority language productions would put the AVEC within reach of broadcasters such as S4C in Wales, BBC Alba in Scotland and TG4 in Northern Ireland.
- **How can the attribution of public service children's content on video sharing platforms be improved?**
28. Greater universal transparency standards and rich metadata would improve attribution. Accessibility to content should be improved through curated collections, better search platforms, prominent labelling and clear branding.
29. Any legislation on prominence on YouTube and other platforms should require the functionality to allow parents to filter specifically for UK-originated, trusted PSB content.
30. PSBs should continue to pursue partnership arrangements with platforms such as YouTube. The UK PSBs could develop a children's app where all UK PSB content is aggregated, as well as a hub which was given prominence on the platforms such as YouTube in the UK.
31. PSB children's commissioning could also make provision in programme budgets for more spend on online marketing and discoverability (although not to the detriment of the core programme-making spend).

#### **How effective are the tools available for parents to control what children are watching on public service media, subscription channels, video sharing platforms?**

32. The UK public service broadcasters offer safe environments with high standards. PSB tools offer PIN protected, curated and ad-free spaces (e.g. iPlayer Kids) and services designed with safeguarding at the core, however older children (10+) are leaving these spaces and seeking age-appropriate content elsewhere.
33. Subscription channels have PIN locks and age ratings to prevent children from watching harmful or inappropriate content on their platforms, but these are unreliable due to being easily by-passed, unmoderated and with algorithms that allow children to be accidentally exposed to potentially harmful content. Consistent standards, greater transparency about algorithms, and better parental awareness is needed.

#### **Health and child development**

**What evidence is there that the TV and video content that children watch, and how they watch it, can contribute:**

- **Positively to their health, learning and development?**

34. When carefully designed for their age group, TV and video content can broaden children's cognitive and linguistic development, offer social and emotional well-being, model positive behaviour, and expand children's imaginations to foster a creative future.
35. With shows linked to the Welsh school curriculum, Cyw supports children to learn letters, numbers and problem solving. Other Cyw content explores friendship, cooperation, relaxation, empathy and problem solving in social contexts. Cyw's apps enable children and parents to engage in learning through play. Stwnsh programme Boom Bang's science experiments are incorporated into schools lessons.
36. Cyw also introduces children to the Welsh language. This helps children's development overall, as research shows that early bilingual exposure can strengthen listening skills and vocabulary development<sup>11</sup>.
  - **Negatively to their health, learning and development?**
37. Ensuring children can view age-appropriate content in a safe digital environment is essential. Without proper safeguards children can be exposed to harmful, illegal, and inappropriate material, ranging from content promoting violence, self-harm, or eating disorders to exposure to pornography, racism, and extremism.
38. In addition, excessive entertainment screen time can displace reading, play, and homework, with Ofcom research reporting that only 56% of parents of 13-17 year-olds agreed their child has a good balance between screentime and doing other things<sup>12</sup>. S4C broadcasts programmes encouraging positive activities beyond the screen. This is far less likely to happen with a private non-PSB profit-making platform, which wishes to keep audiences watching as long as possible.
39. Fast-paced editing (common on YouTube/TikTok) can impair attention span and reduce comprehension. Ofcom research reports that children are recognising this themselves: *"the phrase 'brain rot' was used ... 'Brain rot' videos can be described as frenetic, choppy, and loud and usually include contextless, random, non-sequitur clips that do not seem to make sense"*<sup>13</sup>.
40. In addition, influencer-led videos and covert advertising can distort children's consumer awareness.

### **Wider benefits of children's TV**

**How does children's TV made in the UK contribute to:**

- **The UK's culture and identity?**

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<sup>11</sup> A study using the UK's nationally representative Millennium Cohort Study examined the impact of multiple language exposure (MLE) on verbal reasoning and vocabulary. It found that at age 11, children exposed to multiple languages at age 3 showed a reduced gap in verbal reasoning abilities. [Clayden, J, Hope S, Argyri F, Goksan S, Stefani A. The impact of multiple language exposure on cognition during childhood: evidence from the UK Millennium Cohort Study. Frontier Psychology, May 2023](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report. Ofcom, May 2025, p37](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report. Ofcom, May 2025, p21](#)

41. Distinct from imported content, UK children's programming is educational, socially responsible, and can instil values of fairness, democracy, creativity, and social awareness — reflecting wider British identity and expands language skills, especially minority languages. It showcases accents, communities, and everyday experiences that children recognise, and inclusive casting normalises Britain's diversity. CBBC's *The Dumping Ground* represents children in care; *JoJo & Gran Gran* reflects Black British family life; *Balamory* embeds Scottish island culture; and *Cyw* and *Stwnsh* serve Welsh language audiences.
  42. TAC regularly emphasises in PSB-related policy processes that maintaining production centres in the nations, including in children's content, enables a more accurate and deeper portrayal of people from our nation, and their culture.
  43. *Cyw* and *Stwnsh* promote the Welsh language to children and their parents, playing an integral part in achieving the Welsh Government's goal of one million Welsh speakers by 2050. S4C's children's content has also developed new talent such as writers, producers and directors. UK network TV presenters such as Alex Jones and Gethin Jones formerly presented S4C's children's content.
- **Our cultural and economic exports?**
44. UK's children's content sector generates hundreds of millions in export revenues annually through format sales, licensing, and merchandise and ancillary industries (toys, books, live shows), which extend the economic impact far beyond broadcasting. *Peppa Pig*, one of the world's most lucrative preschool properties, is licensed in 180+ countries; *Thomas & Friends*, a heritage British brand, is adapted globally; *Teletubbies*, *In the Night Garden* and *Hey Duggee* have been exported worldwide and adapted culturally while retaining British 'cultural DNA'.
  45. UK animation studios export programmes and production services, attracting international co-productions, investment, and training opportunities. Shows like *Peppa Pig* project a British creative identity abroad, strengthening the UK's reputation as a leader in storytelling, humour, and innovation for children.