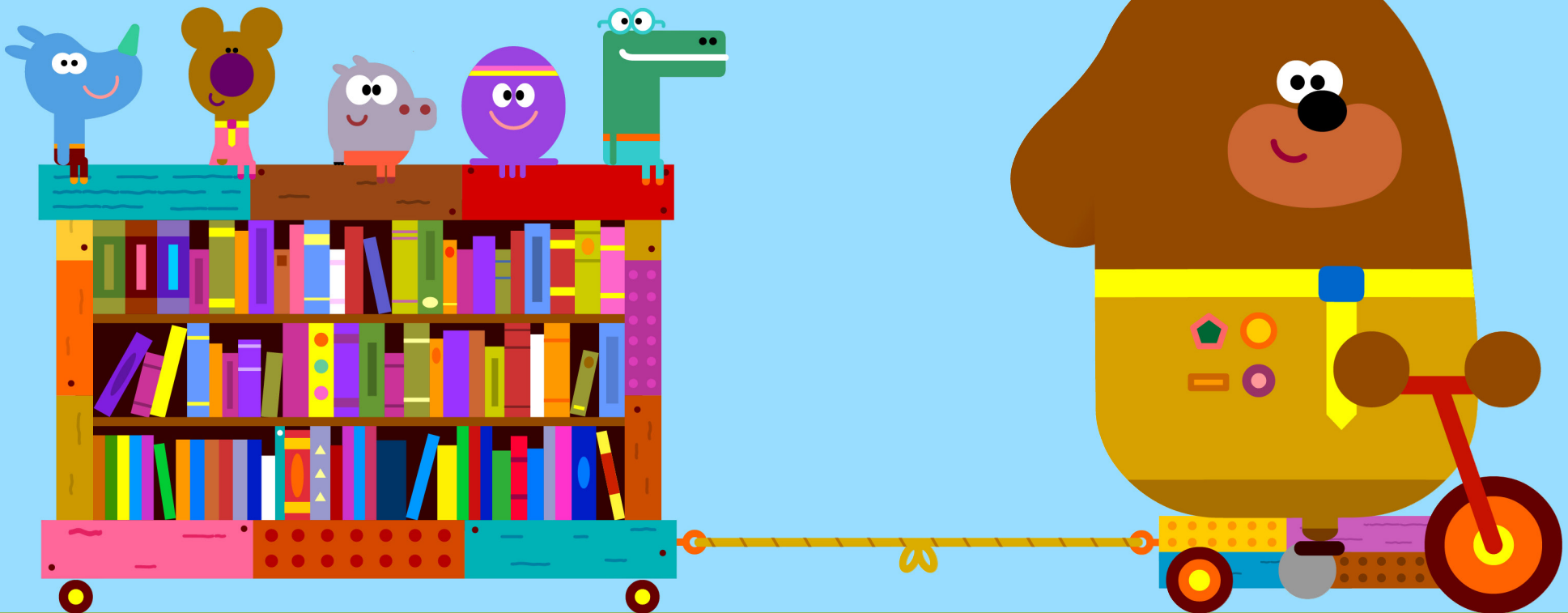


BBC



SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF BBC CHILDREN'S AND EDUCATION



FOREWORD



It is a privilege to lead BBC Children's and Education at a time when the role we play in the lives of young people has never been more important – or more fragile. Children today are growing up in a rapidly changing world: their first experiences of information often come through social media; their early learning is shaped by digital tools; and their entertainment choices are increasingly global, commercial and algorithm driven. In that environment, the BBC remains a trusted constant – providing children and families with content that is safe, enriching, inclusive and reflects the world around them.

Every day, millions of children turn to the BBC to understand the world, learn something new, or simply feel inspired and entertained. Whether it is *Newsround* helping them make sense of complex and sometimes frightening world events, *Bitesize* supporting them through school and exams, or our television programmes reflecting their stories, communities and ambitions back to them – we know this work makes a difference. It helps to build informed citizens, confident learners and creative, curious young people.

This report sets out the scale and depth of that impact. It shows the BBC at its best: universal, high-quality and grounded in public purpose. It also highlights the vital role our sector plays in supporting the UK's creative economy, nurturing new talent and sustaining world leading children's production.

But it also makes clear that the ecosystem around us is under strain. British children's content is at risk. Domestic commissioning has declined, global players are not investing in UK stories for UK kids, and production companies face growing pressure. Without action, there is a real danger that the next generation will grow up without the culturally rooted, educationally rich and imaginative content they deserve. The BBC is working hard to meet their needs. But we cannot do it alone. We want to see more interventions that helps UK-made children's content that reflects UK values get seen by children.

Our ambition is simple: every child – wherever they live, whatever their background – should have access to trusted news, world class educational support and joyful, meaningful entertainment that reflects the UK's diversity and creativity. To deliver that, we need a sustainable future for the wider children's media sector. We are looking at what we can offer during the next Charter period, but a sustainable children's media sector requires

support across PSBs, commercial broadcasters, streamers, online platforms, and all education providers and partners.

I am proud of what our teams and our partners across the country achieve every day. And I remain determined that the BBC will continue to stand with children and families, offering them something only a public service broadcaster can: content that puts their needs, their safety and their future at its heart.



Patricia Hidalgo
Director, BBC Children's & Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The BBC plays a unique and irreplaceable role in informing, educating and entertaining children across the UK.

As the most trusted media organisation among children, parents and teachers, the BBC provides safe, high-quality, age-appropriate content at a time when the online environment is becoming increasingly fragmented, commercialised and risky for young people.

Across news, education and entertainment, the BBC reaches millions of children every week. This universal reach ensures that children from all backgrounds can access trusted information, storytelling which reflects the world around them and high-quality learning resources. The BBC's services have measurable social and economic impacts:

- **High-quality, culturally relevant TV content:** The BBC is the UK's largest commissioner of original children's programming. This ecosystem supports 1,275 jobs in the UK production sector, with 85% of commissioning investment spent outside of London. The BBC creates shows that promote wellbeing, representation and cultural identity, inspire reading, creativity and participation in the arts, and provide shared experiences for families. Based on academic evidence, which shows that engaging in arts and music has value for children by increasing their wellbeing, the wellbeing benefits for children associated with engaging

in the BBC's cultural content are worth over £43 million annually.

- **Transformative education services:** *BBC Bitesize* is the UK's most trusted educational brand for children, teachers and parents. It provides free, curriculum-aligned learning across all nations and subjects. BBC analysis suggests that *Bitesize* contributes to improved exam performance for thousands of children each year, generating over £80 million in long-term economic benefits, with additional research suggesting children who engage with the BBC are more socially mobile. Services outside of the Curriculum help children: research suggests that those who used *Bitesize Careers* on average have an 11% higher income than those who didn't while, in 2025/26, the *Bitesize Careers Tour* reached over 118,000 students across 143 secondary schools.
- **Trusted, impartial news:** *Newsround* and *BBC News* provide essential, child appropriate journalism in a landscape dominated by social media and misinformation. *Newsround* reaches 3.5 million children weekly in term time, is the most trusted news source for 7-12s, and strengthens children's understanding of the world – supporting civic engagement and social cohesion.





However, the children's media sector faces major challenges. UK PSB investment in children's content has declined sharply. Channel 4 haven't commissioned a children's show in decades; ITV has closed its children's channel and recently stopped commissioning; and Channel 5's output is smaller than the BBC's and serves only the preschool segment of the audience.

SVODs are inconsistently commissioning UK-originated children's programming, and inflationary pressures threaten the sustainability of high-quality domestic production. Alongside this, the decline (in real terms) of Licence Fee revenue means it is more difficult for the BBC to fund productions compared with a decade ago. With other UK broadcasters, such as Sky, also cutting commissions for children there is an alarming decline in UK-made children's TV content.

The media landscape that children face means that access to accurate information has never been more important, or more difficult. Children are faced with a rising tide of mis- and dis-information, with millions of children seeing fake information online. Many of the risks associated with generative AI in education fall onto children. However, children are still turning towards the BBC for accurate information, for example, *Newsround* reaches 3.5 million children every week while *BBC Bitesize* reached over half of all 4-15s weekly.

Without intervention, the UK risks losing culturally important content that reflects children's lives and supports national outcomes in education, wellbeing and cohesion. Policy action is therefore essential to make sure children's media providers get the support required to survive and that children are served a balanced media diet. This action builds on asks from UK PSBs, which will help secure UK broadcasting for future audiences.¹

1. Modernised prominence rules, guaranteeing that UK children's content can be easily discovered across platforms dominated by global content. By partnering with YouTube, the BBC is providing children's content to a wider audience. However, more prominence across online platforms and media devices is essential to help children find high-quality UK-based educational and entertainment content as part of a balanced media diet.

2. Champion trusted news, ensuring that impartial and accurate PSB news is promoted on the platforms that young people use. That means promotion of children's news, like *Newsround*, on online platforms and in places where children are learning about the world around them. It also means promoting PSB news to older children, to help counter misinformation and encourage civic engagement.

3. Invest in storytelling across the UK, with an enhancement to the Children's Television Tax Credit Relief to boost investment in UK content. Alongside this, a sustainable funding model for the BBC means the corporation can continue providing high-quality news, education and children's programming to support the sector and innovate to provide new services of public value. Investments to support the wider market should consider how content will reach audiences, so that efforts are not isolated and lack scale. Investments in the right content have the potential to create long-term economic benefits for human capital, earnings outcomes and wellbeing.

¹ Securing distinct British broadcasting for the future; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/articles/2025/public-service-broadcasters-measures-secure-distinct-british-broadcasting>

4. Enable partnerships that work together to compete globally, targeting strategic partnerships between PSBs, commercial broadcasters, streamers, screen agencies and distributors to ensure that children are not reliant on content originated abroad. More collaboration and co-commissioning is required between commissioners and platforms, particularly in a world where scale is increasingly important, to ensure that children are exposed to high-quality, UK-originated content.

“The BBC’s global reputation is unparalleled; being associated with it carries significant value as it is a clear mark of quality content and gives us credibility with other potential partners.”

Sue Goffe, CEO and Partner, Studio AKA

The focus of this report is the impact of the BBC as the largest and most trusted voice for children’s media in the UK. The report considers how the BBC’s commissioning and investment approach provides benefits to children and creates positive industry outcomes across news, education and entertainment output.

This report was prepared in-house by economists in the BBC Policy and Public Affairs team. The analysis presented is based on:

- Primary research from BBC-led stakeholder interviews with nine individuals working across the children’s TV and supplementary education industries (list provided in *Annex*).
- Specifically commissioned survey research of parents by the BBC, focusing on parents’ perceptions and views on children’s media consumption.

- Other BBC-commissioned research into audiences, considering children’s views on the BBC’s news, education and entertainment content.
- Original economic evidence on the impact of the BBC’s content, based on existing publications by academics, consultants and government.
- Complementary desk research of information and reports published by the BBC, industry and academia.

This report is structured as follows:

- **Section 1** highlights the different ways in which the BBC’s TV entertainment content positively impacts children and how the sector benefits from BBC investment.
- **Section 2** considers the BBC’s role in educating children of all ages, considering the impact it has on children’s socioeconomic outcomes and the BBC’s role in a competitive industry.
- **Section 3** looks at how BBC News serves children in a world where news habits are changing, including the role of *Newsround*.

1,275

The children’s TV production sector supports around **1,275 jobs in the UK**

4x

The BBC **commissioned four times the hours of children’s** PSBs, commercial broadcasters and global SVODs combined

£43M

Increase in wellbeing for **children aged 10-14** associated with BBC shows is £43 million per year



Almost 9 in 10 parents, whose children use the BBC, think the BBC’s content for children supports their child’s learning

85%

Of the investment in BBC’s children’s TV commissions have been made **Out Of London**

NO.1

BBC Bitesize is the number 1 trusted **education brand** for children, teachers and parents

£80M

BBC Bitesize intervention creates **long term economic benefits** of £80 million each year

> SOCIAL MOBILITY

Among children who received free school meals, those who participated in BBC educational campaigns were **more likely to end up in higher income (ABC1) groups as adults (58%) than non-users (38%)**.

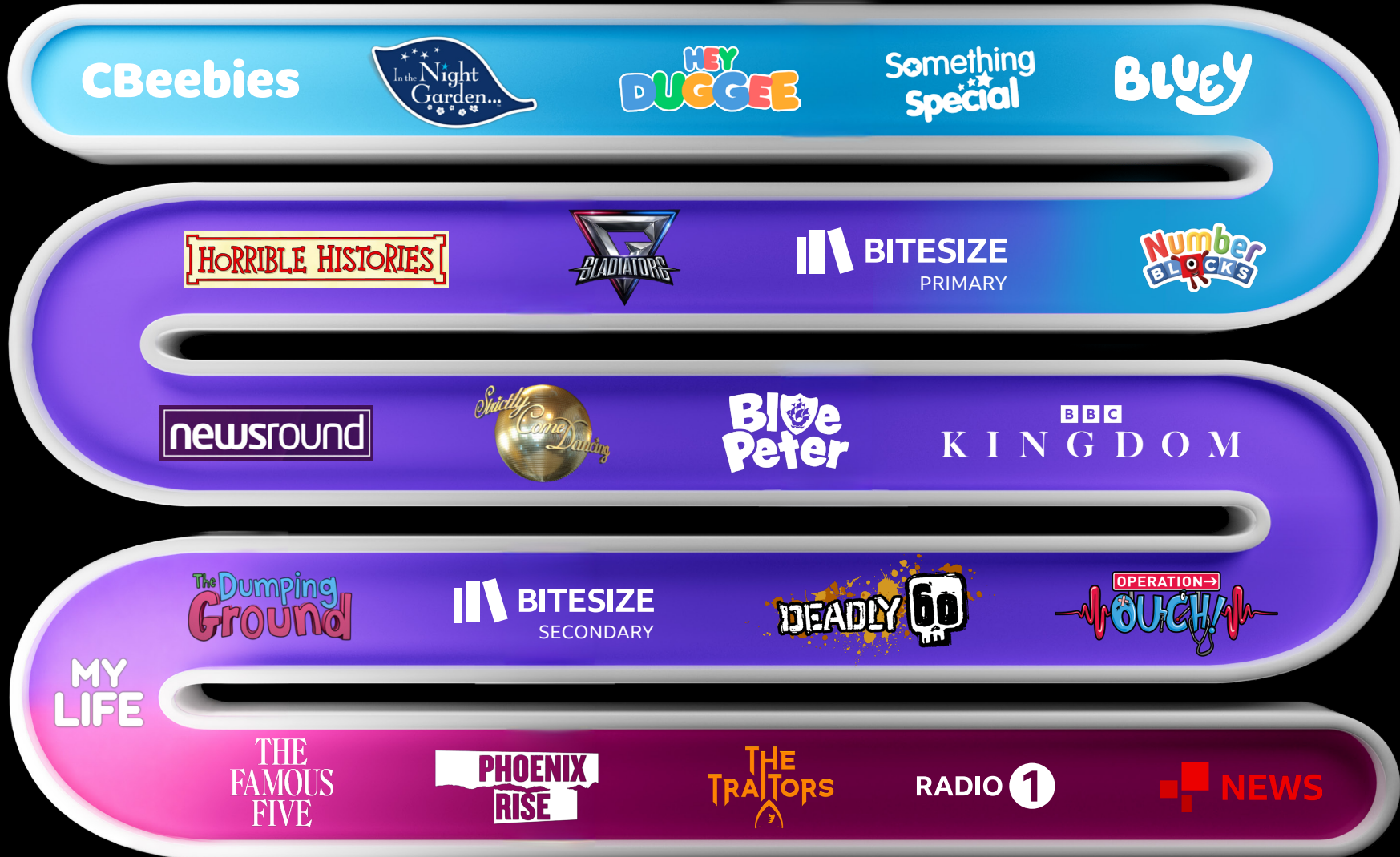
NO.1

BBC is ranked as the number 1 **trusted news brand** for all children and parents

78%

Newsround is good or very good at **delivering suitable news content for their child** according to 78% of parents

0 YEARS



16 YEARS

1 TV FOR CHILDREN

The BBC has been home to children's entertainment since the 1920s, beginning with *Children's Hour*, broadcast as a dedicated show for children across the BBC's radio networks.

Dedicated children's entertainment continued and, after the Second World War, expanded to run across seven days of the week.

In the intervening years, the BBC's content has evolved, following audiences as they consumed video content. This includes iconic shows throughout the decades such as *Blue Peter*, *Jackanory*, *Grange Hill* and *Vision On*, all the way through to *Balamory*, *Tracy Beaker*, *Horrible Histories* and *CBeebies Bedtime Stories*. These shows aimed to provide high quality entertainment for children of all ages.

Today, the BBC is the leading commissioner of original children's programming in the world and the largest in the UK by a considerable distance making it a critical part of the UK's television production ecosystem. In 2024/25 the BBC commissioned 340 hours of new children's programmes (first run UK originations), creating over 50 individual TV series which cater for all ages of UK children up to 12 years old. During this period BBC children's content was streamed 2.2 billion times on BBC iPlayer.²

"The BBC's content for her age is safe, educational, and fun. Shows like CBeebies are designed perfectly for young children, with bright visuals, gentle storytelling, and lessons that help her learn numbers, letters, and social skills. I trust the BBC to provide content that's age-appropriate and positive."

Male, 35-44, 2 children, Yorkshire

Competition for children's content in the UK has never been more intense, with global media organisations providing international content to the UK market. Of the top five media organisations children engage with, the BBC is the only UK brand, alongside Disney, Netflix, YouTube and Amazon Prime.³

This chapter outlines the role of the BBC in supporting the children's TV sector and the positive impact BBC children's content has on audiences. However, there are significant challenges facing the BBC and the UK's children's production sector, which are also highlighted.

² AV Analytics

³ BBC-commissioned research by DJS Research (2026); sample size 2,502. Compared with 4.6 media brands for 7-12s and 3.8 brands for 0-6s.



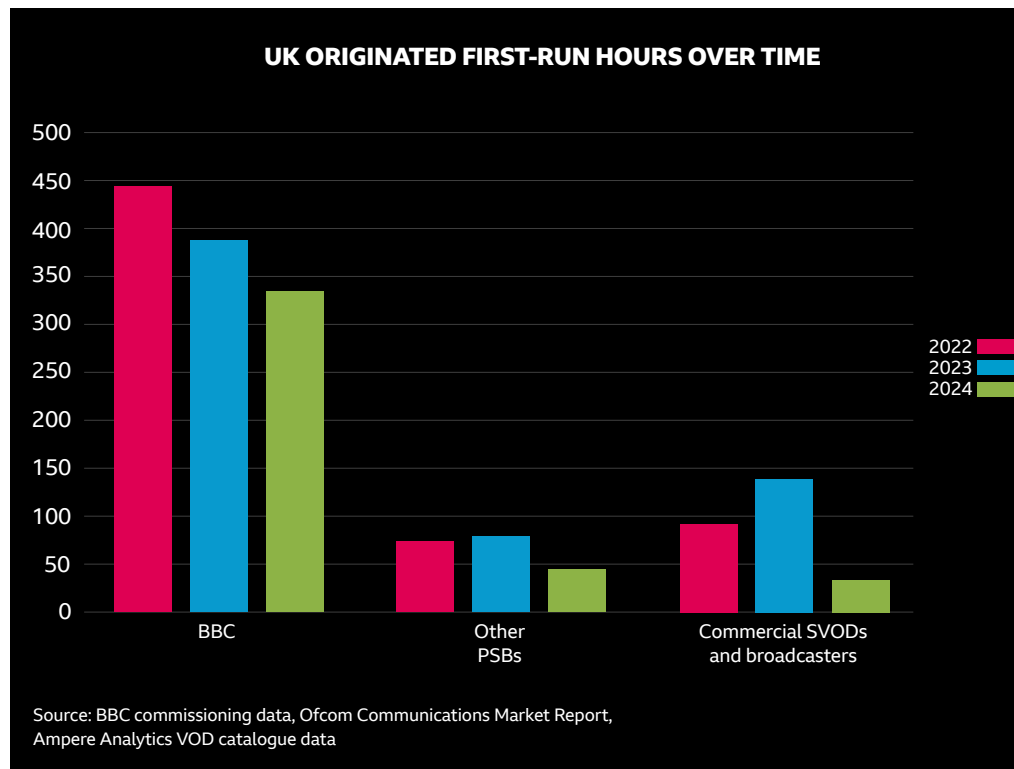
The BBC and the children's TV production sector

The BBC is the most significant commissioner of original children's content in the UK.

The BBC is the number one commissioner of Children's TV titles in the world. In 2024/25 the BBC's children's content reached 50% of all children across the UK every week.⁴ This chart illustrates the scale of the BBC: in 2022, 2023 and 2024, the BBC commissioned more hours in the UK than all other UK PSBs, commercial broadcasters and global SVODs combined.



BBC Studios Kids & Family / Dan Ollerhead



The BBC produces a large volume of high-quality original content, compared with a broader industry commissioning relatively few hours of content. Of those commissions from the rest of the industry, many are taking a “safe bet” on existing Intellectual Property which has a greater chance of meeting benchmarks for success, rather than commissioning original content and taking a chance on creativity. The BBC seeks to re-balance the scales for children by commissioning new and original stories.

“Streamers and platforms have largely pulled back from funding original material prioritising low risk recommissions, so developing and launching new original projects in a saturated market has become particularly challenging.”

Sue Goffe, CEO and Partner, Studio AKA

The BBC is finding a variety of ways to fund original content for children, despite the challenges associated with financing these productions (as detailed later in this section). The most common route is through co-productions and other third-party funding. The BBC has increased the levels of these, with over an additional 50% on top of its internal programme budget in 2024/25.⁵ This is part of the BBC's strategy to increase production values and creativity on original content to compete effectively with international content.

Economic value of the BBC's children's TV investment

The BBC's investment acts as a cornerstone to the UK children's TV production sector. The children's production sector has a significant domestic economic impact, employing staff on- and off-screen and supporting jobs in the wider production sector supply chain.

BBC analysis estimates that the UK children's TV production sector supports around 1,275 jobs.⁶ ⁷This does not account for other employment that may be generated more broadly in producing valuable media content for children, including in audio, education or news, or through induced effects (i.e. when employees spend their wages on goods and services in the wider UK economy).

As the largest single commissioner, and in contrast to the less consistent SVOD investment, the BBC provides the production sector not just with jobs but also helps indies to grow skills and experience. In recent years, the BBC's work with indies has grown, as a proportion of the BBC's total first run hours and spend. Since 2021, both spend and hours with qualifying and non-qualifying indies has increased by over 70%.

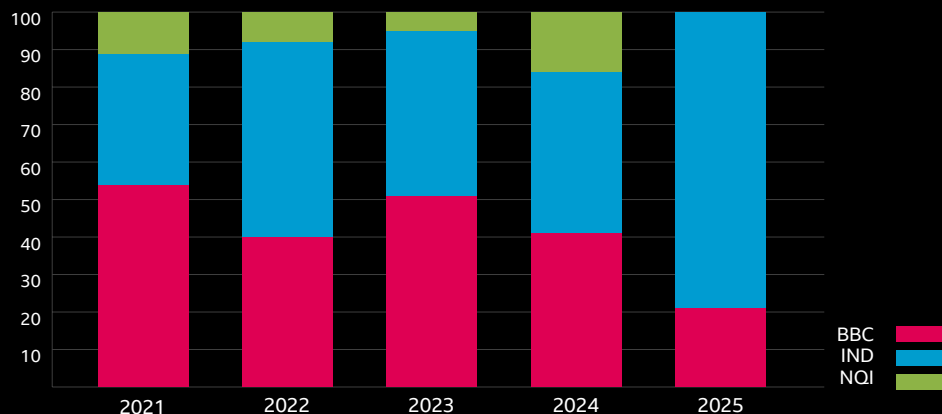
⁴ Kids Cross-Media Insight by Ipsos UK, BBC Annual Report & Accounts 24/25 p223 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/documents/bbc-annual-report-and-accounts-24-25.pdf>

⁵ Based on BBC's internal commissioning data

⁶ Based on PSB children's content spend in CY2024 published in the Ofcom Connected Nations Interactive Report 2025, and BBC analysis of Ampere Analytics P&L figures; used as a proxy for SVOD catalogue spend.

⁷ BBC estimate based on PSB commissioning spend multiplied by the latest ONS employment multipliers, which suggest that 8.733 FTE jobs are supported by every £1m output (revenue) generated within the audiovisual sector (SIC 59 & 60). Note, this assumes that PSB commissioning budgets is equivalent to output i.e. children's commissioning revenues.

BBC FIRST RUN TV SPEND BY PRODUCER TYPE (% OF FIRST-RUN SPEND)



Source: Analysis of BBC commissioning spend

The BBC is focussed on commissioning homegrown content from across the UK, and children's TV is leading the way on this front. Based on the past five years of commissioning value, 85% of the investment in BBC's children's TV commissions have been made outside of London.



CASE STUDY

SUPPORTING INDIES WITH INVESTMENT



The BBC team can offer a way for emerging talent to break into the sector. Big Deal Films started by making Children's TV for the BBC and now make a range of content for all audiences, including the award-nominated show *Dreaming Whilst Black*.

"BBC Children's team are only place that gives new indies a launchpad. Children's is a good launchpad for Indies [...] it allows you to actually prove yourself"

Dhanny Joshi, Managing Director, Big Deal Films

That view is shared by a range of other indies. For example, John Rice at JAM Media said that "the BBC has allowed JAM to grow. The company was set up in Northern Ireland as a support staff network to support the core of the creative work

in Dublin. Now there is 180 people in NI vs 25 in Dublin, [we are] the largest production company in NI and produces all part of the value chain. This has been driven by relocation support and continued support with commissioning from the BBC".

Much of this growth is centred around the BBC since, as John says, "Commitment from BBC is a big validation as you go and look for financing."

This has helped to drive screen sector growth in Northern Ireland since "there are a lot more companies in Belfast vs 12 years ago. These are high quality companies, which brings up standards in the whole sector. An abundance of skills are being created and a lot more content is being created in Northern Ireland."

Q

CASE STUDY

IGNITE ANIMATION INITIATIVE



The graphic features a central globe of the Earth with a dashed white line orbiting it. To the left, a colorful planet with rings is visible. Above the globe, a rocket with a Union Jack flag is launching. The word 'IGNITE' is written in large, white, stylized letters at the bottom, with a starburst effect. The background is a dark blue space filled with white stars.

One specific facet of the BBC's support for developing creative talent has been the Ignite animation project, which has now run for two rounds. Backed by over a million pounds of development funding, Ignite is open to all creators, regardless of experience or track record. Applicants can be individual, collectives or established animation production companies – ideas are judged purely on merit.

Successful entrants to Ignite receive funding to co-develop their idea in partnership with the BBC, creating an industry-standard proof of concept which can ultimately be considered for a commission. As a result of this initiative, the BBC has now launched a new animation series Duck & Frog, with two more titles in production. Round two has received significant interest and is expected to perform similarly well, demonstrating the power of investing in talent.

Consistent funding drives high quality talent

Consistent funding of children's TV shows means that successful indies can receive sustained funding year after year. That approach allows indies to build their skills, provide production staff with opportunities they might not otherwise have had and nurture even better programme makers, not just in children's TV, but across different genres.⁸⁹

"Without [the BBC], we would never have been able to do as much consistent training and development because we wouldn't have had the kind of security of the longer-term work."

Rachel Drummond-Hay, Executive Producer and MD, Drummer TV

The experience gained in children's content production can allow production staff to transfer their skills into different roles or, in some cases, set up their own businesses. Analysis by Screen Skills shows that almost two-thirds of the workforce on Children's TV production have worked on other content types, the highest proportion of all genres.

"We have managed, because of the BBC, to maintain a business that can retain staff and grow staff. It's been an incubator for talent: we've had people go through our company, who then set up their own animation companies. All of those people will have worked on a BBC show at [Blue Zoo]. The BBC has helped us have stability as a company to not just build shows, but to build a business and to help other people build businesses as well."

Oli Hyatt, Managing Director and Co-Founder, Blue Zoo Animation Studio

Shows that have been recommissioned because of their quality offer great opportunities to re-employ creative workers, particularly freelancers. Doing this gives them a chance to build their skills and offers a better chance to succeed and progress in the creative industries. The BBC helps producers make that happen and does so across all areas of the UK by commissioning from a broad range of indies.

"A long contract is a gift for a freelancer, particularly on a show with a great reputation. *Hey Duggee* has been a brilliant training ground for so many people; our crew are proud to be associated with the show."

Sue Goffe, CEO and Partner, Studio AKA



8 Sizing Up: Workforce Composition and Capacity in the Screen Industries (2025), Screen Skills, Page 38 https://www.screenskills.com/media/pfcoubcw/ampere_sizing-workforce_final-report_2025.pdf

9 BBC safeguarding policy <https://www.bbc.co.uk/safeguarding/documents/bbc-safeguarding-policy-extended.pdf>

The way the BBC works with production teams is collaborative, but challenging. High film-making standards at the BBC drives higher standards through the industry, and sets a quality benchmark for film-makers, particularly small indies that do not have the skills associated with more established production companies. However, working with children can have various challenges, so the BBC sets the very highest standards for safeguarding.

“Our work with the BBC Children’s team has made us better filmmakers. That is down to the attentiveness of the Commissioners in each project. You have to be more meticulous because it involves children, it is much more thorough.”

Dhanny Joshi, Managing Director, Big Deal Films.



Impact of BBC content on audiences

Children’s TV commissioned by the BBC is watched by millions of children and is highly valued by audiences. Parents trust the content is suitable for their children, particularly parents of older children: it is the most trusted media brand for parents of young teens. This is driven by the BBC’s high quality editorial standards which aim to act in the public interest.¹⁰ This includes, among other things, protecting audiences (including children) from harmful or offensive content.

The BBC’s focus on providing entertainment in the public interest means it is associated with helping children learn skills that are valuable throughout their lives, increasing wellbeing for children and having distinctive qualities which support cultural identity. This is reflected by the positive perceptions of the BBC in providing content that is distinctive in its value from other providers – of parents whose children use the BBC, 89% think that the BBC supports their child’s learning, 85% think the BBC encourages creativity or new ideas and 88% think the BBC helps their child understand the world around them.¹¹

BBC’s entertainment content is educational and helps children learn skills to navigate the world around them

There is evidence that high quality screen time, especially educational programmes, may be beneficial for developing critical cognitive skills in children.^{12,13} The BBC designs TV shows with educational value and content in mind to help with children’s learning and development. Among all parents, 81% think that the BBC supports their child’s learning and 77% think that the BBC encourages curiosity. BBC content is designed to appeal to viewers of various ages and cover a variety of subjects such as maths, history and science.

“There are shows that benefit children, like the shows we’ve produced with *Alphablocks*, *Numberblocks* or *Colourblocks*, or shows like *Horrible Histories*, where no-one else in the world is commissioning those shows. Nobody was funding them, even when there was more money around for that kind of thing. It is only the BBC that makes those shows. It’s because these shows fall exactly across the lines that the BBC have held so strongly for so many years on providing the blend of educating, entertaining and informing.”

Oli Hyatt, Managing Director, Blue Zoo Animation Studio

Academic evidence suggests that reading for enjoyment has positive wellbeing impacts for children through boosting of children’s self-esteem.¹⁴ Adapting these stories for the screen inspires children to read: almost a quarter of parents claim that the BBC has inspired their child to read.

Creating content in this way supports children’s wider learning and understanding of the world and acts as a gateway for children to explore their interests. The BBC also partners with several organisations to enhance the educational value of this content providing further benefits for children.



10 BBC editorial guidelines <https://www.bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidelines/>

11 BBC-commissioned research, survey of parents (2026); DJS Research; sample size 2,502

12 Rupin R. Thakkar, Michelle M. Garrison, Dimitri A. Christakis; A Systematic Review for the Effects of Television Viewing by Infants and Preschoolers. *Pediatrics*. <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article-abstract/118/5/2025/69962/A-Systematic-Review-for-the-Effects-of-Television>

13 Kondo, K. (2012). Can Television be good for Children? University of Westminster. www.thechildrensmediafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Positive-Impacts-Literature-Review.doc

14 Mak HW, Fancourt D. Arts engagement and self-esteem in children: results from a propensity score matching analysis. 2019. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30985011/>



CASE STUDY

OPERATION OUCH! BRAINS, BOGIES AND YOU AT THE SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY MUSEUM



BBC / Objective Media Group Glasgow

OPERATION OUCH! is a long-running BBC Children's TV series, designed to take children through the human body and explore how doctors use medicine to help people. The success of the TV show prompted the BBC to partner with the Science and Industry museum in Manchester to put on exhibitions for children. The first of these 'Food, Poo and You' opened in 2023 and, following its success, in 2025 a new exhibition 'Brains, Bogies and You' opened.

The exhibition sold 84,875 tickets, with over a quarter of all visitors to the museum saying that 'Brains, Bogies and You' was the main reason for their visit. The BBC's evaluation found the exhibition increased accessibility

to science: over 80% of attendees felt that the exhibition made the museum feel like a place for them and that it brought science alive, whilst around three-quarters of attendees would recommend the exhibition.

The feedback from attendees was very positive. Some responses illustrated how inspiring the event was: "My 11-year-old adores the program and wants to work in medical science. His enjoying the experience so much was wonderful for me" whilst others commented positively on how the exhibition's design increased inclusivity: "It was interactive and so my neurodiverse child was more likely to engage and learn".

BBC's entertainment content is associated with increased wellbeing for children

The increased range of content now available for children can cater to individual interests and help children explore their personalities. However, many children report negative feelings of wellbeing after spending time online.¹⁵ The BBC's entertainment content is designed to have positive impacts on children's wellbeing and is carefully curated to encourage children to do things with personal and societal value: 71% of parents agree that the BBC content supports their child's wellbeing.

Wellbeing impacts associated with engagement with cultural content

The BBC provides entertainment that helps children engage with arts and music. For example, *Go Get Arty* features 'drawalongs' to get children involved in developing their own art. Similarly, *Britain's Best Young Artist* showcased art from children around the UK to inspire creativity. CBeebies has produced many series which introduce young children to all forms of music such as *YoLanda's Band Jam*, *Yukee*, *Musical Storyland* and the *CBeebies Prom*.

Other aspects of the performing arts feature in the BBC's output for children. CBeebies has produced several ballet adaptations, created for preschoolers, and has done the same for five of Shakespeare's plays including *The Tempest* and *Romeo & Juliet*.

The new series *Stage Stars*, launched in 2025, followed young talent being developed at the prestigious Tring Park School for the Performing Arts. All of these shows and productions encourage children to engage with arts, culture and music.

Academic evidence shows that engaging in arts and music has value for children through increased wellbeing.¹⁶ It finds children's wellbeing is improved through boosted self-esteem, improvements in externalising behaviour and quality of life associated with arts engagement.¹⁷ As part of the DCMS framework to value culture and heritage capital, Frontier Economics published a model identifying how children's engagement with culture increases their wellbeing (focused on children aged 10-14).¹⁸ This found a per-person annual benefit for participating in art as £134 per year; and for participating in music this is £68 per year.¹⁹



BBC / Score Draw Music

15 Children's Media Lives (2025) Ofcom, page 56-57 <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/children/childrens-media-lives-2025/childrens-media-lives-2025-summary-report.pdf?v=396299>

16 Mak HW, Fancourt D. Arts engagement and self-esteem in children: results from a propensity score matching analysis. 2019. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30985011/>

17 Externalising behaviour includes outward-directed behaviours that are disruptive, hyperactive or aggressive

18 Culture and heritage capital: monetising the impact of culture and heritage on health and wellbeing (2024); Frontier Economics <https://www.frontier-economics.com/media/2/bntjz/monetising-the-impact-of-culture-and-heritage-on-health-and-wellbeing.pdf>

19 Arts engagement and self-esteem in children: results from a propensity score matching analysis (2019), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30985011/>



BBC / Hungry Bear

Applying this to the BBC's output, the wellbeing impact associated with engaging in BBC art or music content for children aged 10-14 years old is estimated to be around £43 million per year.²⁰ This is the result of thousands of children watching BBC content and active engagement in that content directly inspiring creative expression through art and music.

However, this does not account for the other effects of children engaging with creative BBC content. There are a range of 'make-and-do' and creative shows designed for younger children, such as *Monster Makes* and *Playtime Towers*, with creativity-based programmes for older children such as *Style It Out*. This programme engaged children by using a game show format that challenged young fashion designers to create new styles using only recycled clothing.

By offering a range of cultural, creative and musical content, the BBC can inspire millions of children to not just engage in the arts to improve their wellbeing but launch careers into creative sectors – inspiring future generations to carry the UK's creative torch.

"CBeebies is a great resource, from the shows they have on, to the presenters, and then the Christmas Panto and Proms. My child loves watching what's there and I feel pretty secure in letting my son navigate on iPlayer too [...] he won't get content which I feel is inappropriate".

Female parent, 35-44, 1 child, South Wales

Other wellbeing impacts for children associated with BBC content

There are other areas of the BBC's children's output which can increase wellbeing. The BBC aims to bring people together through its entertainment, promoting family connection and bonding. For example, *Gladiators* is geared towards family viewing: it has typically aired before 6pm on Saturday evenings – an appropriate time for children to watch.

This is reflected in audience viewing data: according to BARB, the total audience figure for the 2025 series was 5.38 million, with 1.09 million of those being children aged 4-15. This suggests that hundreds of thousands of families are watching television together as a bonding experience. This is rare for many parents as children get older, BBC research suggests that less than half of parents with children aged 13-16 watch TV with their children.²¹

When parents watch TV with their children, the parent's engagement reinforces the messages that the child gets from the screen, which in turn boosts learning and understanding, rather than the child passively viewing the content. There are a variety of ways this can help children, such as through language development and media comprehension, academic evidence suggests that co-viewing provides crucial language and social learning skills for children, as well as parent's building connection with children and imparting positive values.^{22 23 24}

"We like to watch *Strictly* as a family, since this is a shared interest and it's something we can talk about together. My child likes to join in with the dancing."

Female parent, 34-45, 2 children, East Midlands



BBC/Graeme Hunter Pictures

A final example is through engaging with nature. There are many BBC programmes which engage with the natural world. *Ranger Hamza's Eco Quest* on CBeebies encourages children to discover things about nature, as do the series *I Can Grow It*, *Teeny Tiny Creatures* and *Andy's Adventures*. The nature series *Deadly* has even taken children from the UK to swim with sharks as part of a Caribbean conservation effort.

20 See Annex for more details

21 BBC-commissioned research, survey of parents (2026); DJS Research; sample size 2,502

22 Linebarger, D., and Vaala, S. (2010) Screen media and language development in infants and toddlers: An ecological perspective, *Developmental Review* 30(2): 176-202, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S027322971000016X>

23 Hanson, K., Anderson, D. and Lavigne, H. (2013) The educational impact of television: Understanding Television's Potential And Limitations. The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies, First Edition.

https://www.academia.edu/17756741/The_educational_impact_of_television_Understanding_Televisions_Potential_And_Limitations

24 Work, A. (2017) The Value of Parental Co-Viewing on Children and Families, *Cinesthesia* 6(1), <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cine/vol6/iss1/3/>

The BBC's landmark series from the Natural History Unit (like *Planet Earth* or *Wild Isles*) are designed for all audiences and are popular with children. Research commissioned by the BBC found that viewers of *Green Planet* were more likely to engage positively with nature as a result of watching the programme.²⁵ Studies show that children who engage with nature receive positive impacts on self-esteem and confidence, stress reduction and restoration, social benefits and resilience.²⁶



BBC/Moonage Pictures/James Pardon

The BBC makes distinctive content with cultural impact

In line with the Mission and Public Purposes, the BBC's content looks to promote on-screen representation, showcasing a diverse range of stories with people of all backgrounds.²⁷ A review into the BBC's representation and portrayal showed that, while progress is being made on the way the BBC represents its audiences on screen, it still has more to do.²⁸ However, the BBC's children's content is noted throughout the report as performing well across a number of areas of representation, including disability and ethnic representation. 73% of parents think the BBC reflects diverse experiences in its children's shows.

This is important for children for multiple reasons. First, it helps children to see themselves reflected back on screen, which can help increase self-esteem and belonging in society. Second, it can encourage acceptance and inclusion of people who are different to them. That can increase social cohesion and improve inclusivity in future.²⁹

"It's incredibly important that we try and remain relevant, and that people see themselves on screen. With *High Hoops*, we're talking specifically about girls in sport and engaging that 70% of girls who drop out of sport by the age of 14."

Rebecca Papworth, MD, *Can Can Productions*



BBC / Lion TV / Eleanor Howarth

For example, *Hey Duggee* is one of the BBC's most popular children's shows. A prominent and recurring character on the show is adopted which aims to help adopted children watching the show feel accepted and represented, but also teaches children that adoption is part of normal life. Similarly, recent drama series for young teens such as *Crongton* and *Phoenix Rise* tell authentic stories of children from a range of backgrounds, offering children a chance to explore their identities.³⁰ The BBC also produces factual output that showcases UK and world issues on screen by telling important stories through the eyes of children and in a way that children can relate to – as encapsulated by the children's single documentary strand *My Life*.

"I don't think there is another broadcaster in the UK that will serve all communities"

Dhanny Joshi, *Managing Director, Big Deal Films*

TV programmes can also showcase difficult topics that are relevant for teenagers such as bullying, relationships and familial issues. The BBC offers shows which cover these topics. For example, *Waterloo Road* is set in a secondary school in Greater Manchester, representing teenage pupils with a range of backgrounds. The storylines covered have included difficult topics which young people might face in their lives such as drug abuse, online bullying and managing complex medical issues. In Series 17, launched in January 2026, the BBC has partnered with the NSPCC on an upcoming storyline which tackles grooming. The BBC sought advice from the charity to ensure the storyline is portrayed sensitively.

25 SIMTRICA-Jacobs (2022), BBC The Green Planet Programme: Analysis of Social Impact Report. Report commissioned by BBC Sustainability. Dr Daniel Fujiwara presentation to Climate Creatives 2022. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/live/climate-creatives-2022/are-we-making-a-difference/>

26 Roberts, A., Hinds, J. and Camic, Paul M. (2019) Nature activities and wellbeing in children and young people: a systematic review. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*. https://repository.canterbury.ac.uk/download/bdf6bab774b4e31b76771b5f7c4ae3d121b15eafef174bdb13ec807ab8492f95796090/Roberts%2C%20Hinds%20%26%20Camic_2019.pdf

27 The BBC's Mission, values and public purposes <https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/governance/mission>

28 Thematic review of portrayal and representation (2026), BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/documents/thematic-review-of-portrayal-and-representation.pdf>

29 The Inclusion Imperative (2021); Common Sense Media <https://www.common Sense Media.org/research/the-inclusion-imperative>

30 Ellithorpe M. E., Bleakley A. (2017); Wanting to See People Like Me? Racial and Gender Diversity in Popular Adolescent Television <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4900900/#S20>

Challenges in the children's TV sector

However, the UK's Children's TV industry is under threat, which will also have long-term repercussions across the wider British TV industry.

Original TV content for children in the UK is falling

There have been significant challenges for UK channels in commissioning children's content. Channel 4 haven't commissioned a children's show in decades; ITV has closed its children's channel and recently stopped commissioning; Sky have stopped original commissioning as part of their Sky Kids programming; Channel 5's output is smaller than the BBC's and serves only the preschool segment of the audience; and S4C only serves children in Wales.

The entrance of global media providers into the UK market over recent years has increased the availability of children's content in the market, with these players often having significantly larger content budgets. However, this has not translated to a substantial increase in commissioning of UK content, as has been seen in other genres. Instead, the increased supply is principally of international content, predominantly from the US, which does not have the same cultural or educational relevance as UK content.



“We need to decide as a nation if we want to simply be a shop window for American content and values or whether we think it's important to reflect to children of the UK stories that are much more relevant to them.”

Rebecca Papworth, MD, Can Can Productions

Children are now exposed to a very wide range of shows (not all of them aimed at children) with cinema-level production standards and expect more from UK-made TV programmes. To meet this challenge, the BBC has invested in shows with higher production values and standout titles. However, that means the BBC is commissioning fewer hours overall than in previous years.

NUMBER OF FIRST-RUN HOURS PSB HOURS OF CHILDREN'S TV



The knock-on impact of all these market changes for producers has been a slowdown in the number of overall commissioning opportunities. For PSB commissions, there were fewer than half of the commissioning hours in 2024 compared with 2010. For many firms in that sector, fewer opportunities for commissions will impact their business model and their ability to scale up in line with the talent available. The BBC remains a large provider of original commissions which is helping to support children's sector indies but is increasingly alone in doing so.

“Our work with the BBC on children's TV, not only has it been the economic backbone of Drummer sustaining us, but also really added to the reputation of the work that we do. The BBC is the last stalwart of children's commissioners.”

Rachel Drummond-Hay, Executive Producer and MD, Drummer TV

While audiences are moving towards global SVODs and online platforms, they are not commissioning TV content made in the UK for children: in 2025 only 12 hours of children's TV content was made by SVODs and online platforms in the UK.³¹

“Without the BBC the children's genre would be probably gone [in the UK]. That is how crucial it is”

Rebecca Papworth, MD, Can Can Productions

Funding pressures make it hard to finance opportunities

That slowdown in commissioning opportunities from UK-based commercial and public service organisations makes it harder to finance the sector. Ofcom's communications market report illustrates this, with PSB spend for first-run UK originated children's TV content falling by 40% from 2010 to 2024.³² Without the Children's TV tax credit, shows would not be able to get off the ground.

“The tax credit is critical. I think that that's such an important gap for completing the financing that it makes or breaks TV shows [...] it can literally be the thing that completes your financing to allow you to even go into production. Without it everything's a non-starter.”

Dhanny Joshi, Managing Director, Big Deal Films

Financial incentives, such as tax credits, need to be considered alongside prominence of content. Otherwise, there is the risk of material being created but not discovered by the audience.

In parallel, the scale of content offered by a commissioner or platform is an important factor in helping audiences find material, particularly in the sea of content they now face. If platforms that have large scale and reach can be incentivised to commission UK children's content, they have the ability to surface and promote it within their portfolios.

Tax credits are one incentive, and these could go further in targeting content which has particular British cultural relevance. Whilst a boost to tax credits would help, these measures can only go so far.

31 Ofcom: Media Nations 2025 p62. SVODs: Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, Apple TV+, Discovery+, and Paramount+

32 From £130 million to £77 million, 2024 prices; <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-and-broadband/service-quality/communications-market-report-2025-interactive-data>

There is more to be done if the UK children's media sector is going to reverse the long-term decline. One option is a contestable fund for children's TV, akin to the Young Audiences Content Fund. However, this is unlikely to be as helpful as more direct stimulus measures aimed at platforms where children already are. A fund involves creating a parallel commissioning system which distributes limited spending across a wide range of projects and platforms. This dilutes the focus and scale needed to reach audiences. Children's TV content grows in viewing across multiple series of a programme but a contestable fund cannot support multiple series over a long time horizon.

A more effective response is to direct efforts towards the commissioning systems of the platforms themselves, who can champion projects they have created and make a much bigger impact with the audience. Any future children's funding package must consider not just how to produce more programming but how best to ensure that this content is going to cut through to UK children and not be isolated in a sea of content.



The funding pressures have knock-on consequences for the pipeline of talent in the sector. Consistent funding along with competitive tendering are critical to maintaining high quality. That is more difficult to deliver when funding is being reduced. As a result, past UK success stories such as Blue Zoo Animation Studio and Studio AKA are going to be harder to replicate. The implication is that the talent pipeline is going to run dry in this industry if the funding is not available to maintain a competitive production sector.

“The next generation struggle to find that initial job there's so many fewer hours and less programming [...] they can't get the consistency of funding because there isn't a strong home market”

Oli Hyatt, Managing Director, Blue Zoo Animation Studio

There are also non-negotiable costs associated with making Children's TV, especially on shows which feature child actors or reality shows featuring children. When children are involved in the creation or making of a TV show, much more care is required to ensure they can safely participate in filming. That work means much more meticulous planning, which increases costs for children's TV producers, further squeezing their margins.

“There are safeguarding and welfare issues around working with children and young people [...] they are the hardest programmes to make and it's certainly not relaxing just because they're for children.”

Rachel Drummond-Hay, Executive Producer and MD, Drummer TV



CASE STUDY

THE IMPACT OF CHILDREN IN NEED



The BBC helps children through its media programming, but in the UK many children and young people face complex and substantial challenges. BBC Children in Need funds vital support for children and young people navigating challenges related to mental health, poverty, social inequity and family circumstances.

The BBC has long been running charity appeals for children's charities: on Christmas Day in 1927, the BBC made its first charity appeal via radio broadcast. The first televised appeal was in 1955 on Christmas Day, which continued until 1979. In 1980, the BBC registered *Children in Need* as a charity and aired a new telethon format. This has continued every year since, raising over £1 billion for children and young people around the UK.

In 2024/25, this money went towards supporting over 363,000 children and young people all across the UK. This funding achieves strong outcomes for children in helping them overcome challenges in their lives.

Following the BBC's intervention, thousands of children report stronger emotional and physical wellbeing, better relationships, stronger self-belief, increased essential education and skills, are more empowered and are physically safer. Recent research highlighted that 98% of children who attended a CiN funded project said they feel happier and more confident as a result – it gives them somewhere to belong, feel safe and have fun.

From an economic perspective, we know that this funding is value for money. For example, youth work makes up around 30% of the funding portfolio. As the largest independent funder of youth work, which funds community centres and youth clubs, as well as physical and online hubs for young people, the BBC helps create positive influence in children's lives. The Centre for Young Lives found that for every £1 invested in youth provision like this, there is a long-term return of at least £2.40 in financial, economic and social benefits.

2 EDUCATION SERVICES

For over a hundred years, the BBC has played a crucial role to inform, educate and entertain the country.

During this time, the BBC has continued to provide a universal education service for children, but in doing so it has followed the audience onto new platforms and developed innovative educational programming with children and teachers at the centre.

In the 1920s, the BBC launched what was known as the *Schools Broadcasting*, with specially made radio programming that catered to what teachers required. As television developed, so did the BBC's approach to education: the BBC developed innovative programming like *Look and Read* which used animated sequences for teaching children how to read before *Sesame Street*. That evolution continued as audiences moved online with the launch of *BBC Bitesize*, the country's leading online educational resource for children.³³

This chapter describes the range of educational resources offered by the BBC and outlines how these resources provide benefits to children, parents and teachers.

BBC Bitesize as a universal and trusted resource

The BBC is the home of *BBC Bitesize*, a universal education provider with high-quality material covering the national curriculum, as well as broader topics for children. All subjects and nations are covered, giving children the ability to access free online materials. According to research by Ofcom and the BBC, these materials are the most trusted among children, parents and teachers.

Universality of Bitesize resources

The BBC aims to offer education support to every child in the UK on a wide range of subjects across primary and secondary school. It also includes resources for parents helping children in their pre-school years, and resources across the nations, providing children in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales with the same access. This leads to wide reach: around half of secondary school children use *Bitesize* on a weekly basis at home and, during term time, around one in six children use *Bitesize* at least twice a week.³⁴



³³ 100 years of BBC Education <https://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/education100>

³⁴ DJS Research Student and Teacher Tracker, Autumn 2024. BBC monitoring of Bitesize usage.

The BBC is a universally accessed and popular education service across the UK. However, each nation in the UK has its own exam boards and, in the case of Scotland, its own qualification system. *BBC Bitesize* is present across all nations and reflects these differences, providing high quality content for all ages.

For example, *BBC Bitesize* is the top used specialist education service in all nations for secondary school students. For primary school students, *BBC Bitesize* is in the top two providers across all nations (top provider for Wales and Scotland and second for England and Northern Ireland).³⁵No single provider has the same reach across the whole of the UK as *BBC Bitesize* in terms of subjects covered. *Bitesize* provides trustworthy educational content across the widest range of subjects for free.

Access to a range of topics is not exclusive to *Bitesize*. Wikipedia and YouTube are more widely used than *Bitesize* overall but do not specifically match their offer to the educational needs of children in the UK. Wikipedia is simply an online encyclopaedia, with no children-specific content, nor any engaging media content.



YouTube styles itself as a learning platform and features many educational creators.³⁶ However, it is up to the audience to select the material for themselves, as there is no system for verifying the content's overall educational standard. More generally, as a platform, YouTube has limited editorial oversight, meaning educational creators may be recommended alongside less reputable channels.³⁷

The value of the BBC in providing human curation and academic rigour is one reason why the BBC is the number one ranked media brand that parents trust to provide high quality educational content.³⁸The BBC is also keen to bring public service benefit to audiences in as many places as possible. By partnering with YouTube, the BBC can increase partnerships with successful and reputable creators who are building audiences with young people in order to extend its reach.

Bitesize as a trusted resource

The wide use of *Bitesize* is driven by a variety of factors, including the high quality of content and the free availability. However, one key driver of usage is that everybody involved in a child's education trusts *BBC Bitesize*: children, parents and teachers.

Educational websites tend to be highly trusted by **children**. Ofcom research asked teenagers using online search the extent to which they trusted the information they found there. Educational websites, such as *BBC Bitesize*, came out top. 83% of 13-17 year-olds using online search on educational websites said they either always or mostly trusted the information they saw to be true or accurate, followed by search engines (73%) and news websites (67%).³⁹



35 DJS Research Student and Teacher Tracker, Autumn 2024. BBC monitoring of Bitesize usage. In England and Northern Ireland, Bitesize is second to specialist online maths services.

36 YouTube for Learning <https://www.youtube.com/howyoutubeworks/learning/>

37 <https://dig.watch/updates/ai-generated-fake-science-videos-being-recommended-to-children-on-youtube-bbc-reports>

38 BBC-commissioned research, survey of parents (2026); DJS Research; sample size 2,502

39 Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report (2025); Ofcom; Page 46

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/children/childrens-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2025/childrens-media-literacy-report-2025.pdf?v=396621>



According to DJS Research, the most common reasons for regularly using *Bitesize* among primary and secondary children is because they trust it to give them the right answers and it makes things easier to understand. Compared with all other educational services, *Bitesize* is the most trusted to provide children with the right answers.

Parents also trust BBC resources: parents rate the BBC as the most trusted media brand to provide educational content for their children, with over three quarters of parents rating the quality of suitable education provision for their children as good or very good.⁴⁰

“It has really supported her learning by breaking down topics in simple, engaging explanation.”

Male parent, 25-34, 2 children, Northern Ireland

As education experts, it is also important that teachers trust the BBC's content to provide quality content for children. Research by DJS finds that *Bitesize* is the most trusted resource for both **primary and secondary teachers**. *BBC Bitesize for Teachers* is also a highly trusted resource and is the second most trusted resource for secondary teachers (and third most trusted for primary teachers).⁴¹

Research also suggests that *Bitesize* is rated as one of the most useful resources by teachers to help children with their education. Specifically, it is rated as a top resource to help children with their learning across secondary school and primary school teachers:

- Among secondary school teachers, *Bitesize* is rated as the most helpful resource to: help students revise; help students learn independently at home; make things easier for students to understand; and help students practise what they have learned.
- For primary school teachers, *Bitesize* is rated as the top resource for making things easier for students to understand; and helping to explain a new concept or topic.

When it comes to trust in educational resources, the role of generative artificial intelligence (gen AI) is extremely prevalent and growing rapidly.⁴²

There are opportunities associated with gen AI usage, particularly for teachers and education professionals. However, according to the Department for Education, many of the risks of gen AI usage fall onto pupils since content produced could be inaccurate, out of date, inappropriate or biased, among other issues.⁴³ In this context, trusted providers of education resources like *Bitesize* are a safe way for children to learn online but are protected from the harmful aspects of gen AI. The BBC is exploring in the next Charter a commitment to offering personalised education based on *Bitesize* resources, helping to ensure every child has access to agentic AI learning tools that children, parents and teachers can trust.

40 BBC-commissioned research, survey of parents (2026); DJS Research; sample size 2,502

41 DJS Research Student and Teacher Tracker, Autumn 2024. BBC monitoring of Bitesize usage.

42 <https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/children-young-people-and-teachers-use-of-generative-ai-to-support-literacy-in-2024/>

43 Generative artificial intelligence (AI) in education (2025); Department for Education;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/generative-artificial-intelligence-in-education/generative-artificial-intelligence-ai-in-education#opportunities-and-challenges-for-the-education-sector>

Bitesize and BBC children's and education services beyond the curriculum

Outside of the core curriculum, there are a range of BBC educational services offering valuable resources to children, teachers and parents.

Pre-school skills

There are large scale issues with children starting school without being able to complete simple tasks and not being able to communicate with teachers. Teachers report that 37% children are not ready (with school readiness declining year on year), whilst fewer parents are engaging in home learning activities.^{44 45}

Early language skills are a key indicator of future life outcomes in children and there are significant costs associated with not supporting early language skills. Total lifetime economic costs of weak language skills for one cohort of three-year-olds could amount to as much as £330 million.⁴⁶ This estimate is calculated through the value of increased employment and higher wages of children with better early language skills, alongside wider value to society. This is a conservative estimate, with experts such as Kindred Squared and the National Literacy Trust suggesting that this is a growing problem.

The BBC's *Tiny Happy People* initiative identified this issue and, in 2020, launched services on speech and language development. It is an ambitious programme, which seeks to work with a coalition of partners to significantly reduce the number of children in the UK who start primary school without the required levels of language and communication that will allow them to thrive.

Now part of *CBeebies Parenting*, this unique service provides free parent-facing advice, activities, articles and short films to support development of under-five's language and communications skills. The BBC provides this because parents and health practitioners trust the BBC.

"For me it's credible because it's BBC. It's all checked, meaningful, evidence based with practitioners ... Even if families are not consuming the BBC it's still trusted. It's an institution."

Kerry Bennett, Asst Director, Better Start Bradford.

The *CBeebies Parenting* resources are rooted in evidence and have been developed with the help of leading experts in the fields of child and language development to ensure parents and carers are being offered the best advice.⁴⁷ These resources are now being recommended by professional speech and language therapists to parents as part of child development.

"There's a solid evidence base and there's reference to the research behind it – for example with the science clips. There's a confidence in the resources as a result."

Janet Cooper, Clinical lead Speech and Language Therapist, Midlands Foundation NHS Trust



"You're looking at something that's evidence based. We knew that worldwide expertise has gone into help develop *THP*, and knew it was high quality, steeped in evidence and a co-production with parents."

Claire Campbell, Service Manager Early Years, Family Hubs and Children's Centres, Liverpool City Council

44 School Readiness Survey (2026); Kindred Squared; Page 4 <https://kindredsquared.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/School-Readiness-Survey-January-2026-Kindred-Squared.pdf>

45 Parents support for young children's literacy in the home (2024); National Literacy Trust; Page 3 https://nlt.hacdn.org/media/documents/Parents_support_for_young_childrens_literacy_in_the_home_in_2024_WCGUVlq.pdf

46 The economic cost of early vulnerable language skills (2021); Pro Bono Economics; Page 6 <https://pbe.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/download-this-report-59554aa1.pdf>

47 Experts include The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, The Institute of Health Visiting, The Royal College of Midwives, I CAN, early years practitioners through the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and speech and language academics at The University of Liverpool, University of Sheffield, and LuCiD.

Partnerships to support school-age learning

Partnerships are a crucial part of the BBC's approach to education, especially in the case of dedicated campaigns. For example with the *Bitesize Super Movers* and *Super Movers for Every Body* campaigns, the Premier League were a key partner in helping to create both educational resources for primary schools to use in relation to physical activity, and in supplying PE equipment to over 6,000 schools to allow inclusive sports to be played.

Bitesize has also undertaken two *micro:bit* campaigns, bringing together 29 partners such as Microsoft, ARM and Barclays to create the original computing device which was launched in 2015 and deployed to 98% of year 7 classes across the UK. More recently in 2024 the '*micro:bit - the next gen*' campaign brought it to a new generation of pupils – this time delivering over 600,000 devices to interested schools and using them to create a nationwide survey of the space given over to school playing fields.

BBC *500 Words* is an annual campaign which is the UK's most successful writing competition for children, encouraging them to write a short story which they would love to read. The aim of the competition is to provide a safe and empowering space for children to bring their stories to life. A variety of partners are involved in supporting *500 Words*, including World Book Day, Crayola and the English Football League. Queen Camilla is the most prominent advocate for *500 Words*, and the final is hosted at Windsor Castle.

The BBC is uniquely placed to engage with high-profile partners and reach millions of children which enables mass participation in education programmes.

Future careers for young people

As well as education services which will enable children to be better able to pursue their career of choice, the BBC also provides inspiration for potential future careers. Through its *Careers In...* service, the BBC can draw on a range of partners to provide a breadth of career inspiration and examples.⁴⁸ This provides examples of different types of careers from Engineering, Construction and Manufacturing, to Law, Politics and Government with inspiring and relatable stories to children of all backgrounds.

The BBC also provides a range of free guidance online for children to help with their future careers. This ranges from advice on skills needed for different jobs and careers, to more practical tips, including advice on further education. There is also advice from BBC apprentices on the benefits of apprenticeships based on experiences at the BBC.

The BBC is particularly well-placed to provide advice on careers in the creative industries. As a large and trusted brand in the sector the BBC can help children think about future work in the media sector through the *Bitesize Careers Tour*. This is an interactive event which, in 2025/26, reached over 118,000 students across 143 secondary schools to inspire young people about their futures. The tour illustrated the range of jobs available, particularly in the creative sector and reassured students of the variety of pathways into work.



An evaluation by the BBC found that it had greatest impact on unsure students to research new and different careers.

Media Literacy throughout children's lives

Children are spending more time online, with 14 year olds now spending on average over 4 hours a day online (see Section 3, News for children for more detail).⁴⁹ However, the online world is potentially a harmful place for children, with 31% of children saying they had experienced someone being 'nasty or hurtful' to them online and a third of children say that they had seen something 'worrying or nasty' online.⁵⁰ The 2025 Curriculum Review highlights the changing world for children and trends in digital information which "demand heightened media literacy".⁵¹

Parents and teachers need more tools to help children navigate their safety online. BBC research finds that 60% of teachers have appetite for more resources in helping children identify misinformation and 56% want more resources for identifying reliable sources.⁵² For parents, the majority do not think the benefits outweigh the risks of their children being on social media, messaging and video-sharing apps. Only three in ten parents of 3-17s who go online agree that the benefits outweigh the risks of their child being on these apps.⁵³ More than seven in ten (72%) parents are concerned that their child would be unable to distinguish between the real and the fake online.

48 BBC Bitesize, Careers In... <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/groups/cpw27rkdtkyt>

49 Children's Passive Online Measurement (2025); Ofcom; Page 5, <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/online-safety/research-statistics-and-data/protecting-children/ofcom-childrens-passive-online-measurement.pdf?v=399299>

50 Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report (2025); Ofcom; Page 32

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/children/childrens-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2025/childrens-media-literacy-report-2025.pdf?v=396621>

51 Building a world-class curriculum for all (2025); Curriculum and Assessment Review; Page 10

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/690b96bbc22e4ed8b051854d/Curriculum_and_Assessment_Review_final_report_-_Building_a_world-class_curriculum_for_all.pdf

52 BBC-commissioned Hook research on 21st Century Skills (2025); Sample size 400 teachers

53 Children's Media Literacy Report (2025); Ofcom; Page 5,

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/children/childrens-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2025/childrens-media-literacy-report-2025.pdf?v=396621>



As Ofcom noted in its Annual Report on the BBC, the BBC has a key role in promoting media literacy, amid rising misinformation and fast-changing digital platforms. For children specifically, Ofcom's report on the future of Public Service Media notes the BBC's role in supporting media literacy through its children's education initiative.⁵⁴ There are several examples of resources to support media literacy, including:

- **Bitesize Other Side of the Story:** Helps children navigate fake news and misinformation and to be more critical and curious about what they see and share online. Most recently a new media literacy mini-drama called *Solve the Story* has been launched.
- **Bitesize guide to AI:** Gives children the skills and knowledge required to get more confident and comfortable using Artificial Intelligence tools, to enable children to thrive in an AI world.

- **Online safety:** BBC online safety resources for primary schools have been mapped to the Education for a Connected World framework set out by the UK Council for Internet Safety. Pages contain downloadable teacher resource documents with lesson ideas, discussion points and potential homework activities, all of which are available via *Bitesize*. The *Bitesize Live Lessons* series provides an edition each year for Safer Internet Day, with this episode being among the most popular in the series with schools.

Universal coverage, trust from children, parents and teachers, and media expertise means that the BBC is well-placed to provide these resources more widely, subject to the funding and scope to do so.

Economic effects of the BBC on audiences

The BBC improves economic outcomes for children by providing high quality education services. This includes mass engagement (i.e. Bitesize), language development programmes and targeted educational content to fill national skills gaps. The key economic impact associated with the BBC's education resources is the improvement in educational outcomes for children and associated human capital uplift. Of the parents that use the BBC's educational content, 99% of them think that this content has a positive impact on their child.

"BBC Bitesize has had the most positive impact for my child, because the videos and explanations make school topics easier to understand. It has helped them feel more confident with their homework and improved their understanding of subjects like maths and English."

Male parent, 34-45, 2 children, North West England

It is well-documented that improvements in education are associated with better economic outcomes as adults, with a one-grade improvement at GCSE associated with around 1% increase in earnings over a lifetime.⁵⁵ These benefits do not just manifest as individual benefits, there are broader societal benefits to a better educated population. For example, there is evidence that improved education across a population leads to higher democratic participation and civic engagement.⁵⁶

54 Transmission Critical: The future of Public Service Media (2025); Ofcom

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/public-service-broadcasting/public-service-media-review/transmission-critical-the-future-of-public-service-media.pdf?v=400631>

55 GCSE attainment and lifetime earnings (2021); Department for Education; https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60c36f0cd3bf7f4bd11a2326/GCSE_Attainment_and_Lifetime_Earnings_PDF3A.pdf

56 Bovens, M., and A. Wille. (2010). The education gap in participation and its political consequences. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/ap.2010.7>

Long term economic outcomes from using Bitesize

As a result of its wide reach and its strong educational foundations, *Bitesize* has a positive impact on educational attainment among children. With improved education, children can boost their future earnings potential. Studies commissioned by the Department for Education demonstrate how increased educational attainment can boost an individual's expected earnings over the course of their life.⁵⁷



By comparing *Bitesize* use to expected grade overperformance, it is possible to estimate the impact of *Bitesize* on children's educational attainment. Using conservative estimates, BBC research on *Bitesize* impacts finds that almost 8,000 children receive higher grades at GCSE as a result of *Bitesize*.

Whilst this approach has several caveats and may not fully reflect the impact on future earnings (see Annex for more detail), the impact from the BBC's education intervention could be over £80 million each year in economic benefits, which is just over £10,000 per person. The key implication for policymakers is that high quality and widespread education interventions, like *Bitesize*, can have compounding effects on human capital and earnings outcomes.

"Using *BBC Bitesize* support in her school and home learning has significantly improved her grades and boosted her confidence in school while doing presentations."

Male parent, 25-34, 3 children, North West England

Other research has found similar, quantifiable impacts in terms of improved economic outcomes and earnings uplifts as a result of using *Bitesize*. Research for the BBC by Beano Brain recorded use of BBC as a child and other outcomes to identify the impact of BBC education programmes.

The research considered how 16-34 year-olds who used the BBC in childhood impacted their current life outcomes. This research found positive impacts for those who used BBC educational campaigns. Of those who used BBC educational campaigns, 76% said that it helped them achieve higher grades whilst, for *Bitesize* specifically, 56% of respondents said it helped them achieve better grades. Research by Beano Brain also reported an income effect: those who used *Bitesize Careers* on average have an 11% higher income (£54,268) versus those who didn't (£48,743).



To estimate the impact of BBC's education for socioeconomic outcomes, Beano Brain observed eligibility at school age for free school meals (i.e. a proxy for their socioeconomic background) and their current socioeconomic grade.⁵⁸ The research was seeking to measure the extent to which users of BBC Educational campaigns are socially mobile versus others.

The research found that, for those who didn't take part in BBC Educational campaigns, 38% moved from having free school meals to social grade ABC1. However, for those who took part in BBC Educational campaigns, 58% moved from having free school meals to social grade ABC1. In other words, children who use BBC education appear more likely to be more socially mobile in later life.

Whilst it is not possible to say definitively that this is a solely BBC impact, the evidence is that BBC provides education resources that are associated with better exam results, improved life opportunities and social mobility. The key implication for policymakers is that high quality and widespread education interventions, like *Bitesize*, can have compounding effects on human capital and earnings outcomes.

"The BBC content that has had the most positive impact for my child is *BBC Bitesize*. The short engaging lessons and videos help them understand school subjects more clearly, especially in areas they usually find challenging. It has boosted their confidence, improved their study habits and made learning feel more enjoyable and less stressful"

Female parent, 25-34, 2 children, North East England

⁵⁷ GCSE attainment and lifetime earnings (2021); Department for Education; https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60c36f0cd3bf7f4bd11a2326/GCSE_Attainment_and_Lifetime_Earnings_PDF3A.pdf

⁵⁸ These variables were chosen because: 1). They are measurable; and 2). Not subject to recall error.



CASE STUDY

THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF SPEECH AND LANGUAGE RESOURCES



The BBC worked with the University of Sheffield to evaluate the impact of CBeebies Parenting speech and language resources. The evaluation measured whether sending texts with BBC video resources to families supports caregiver-child interaction and ultimately results in better language outcomes for children.

The key findings were in terms of caregiver responsiveness (i.e. whether the prompted videos helped them engage with their child) and child communicativeness (i.e. whether children are more communicative as a result of their caregivers being given more BBC videos).



- Caregivers who had received BBC videos tended to be more linguistically responsive than those who received the control videos. Caregivers in the intervention group engaged in significantly more semantically contingent responses (responses that are prompt and relevant to the child's attention) than those in the control group. This was a particularly strong effect for participants without a degree.
- The evaluation found that children using BBC resources used significantly more pre-linguistic communicative gestures (such as pointing and showing) before they began talking. And once the infants began talking, video analysis suggests these children use more words in conversation, suggesting more confident children.



"[It] brings to life important messages we give to parents."

Alison Morton CEO Institute of Health Visiting (IHV)

More generally, parents were happy with the service, with 91% of parents saying they'd recommend this service to a friend. This evaluation suggests THP is an effective intervention for children's language development and positively impacts children when parents use it.

"This is definitely something I would recommend to other parents."

Kamilah, parent of three, CBeebies Parenting user

3 NEWS FOR CHILDREN

As the world's most trusted international news provider, the BBC is a strong brand associated with reliable and independent news.

This chapter outlines how the news landscape is changing for children and young people. While there are significant challenges, this chapter outlines the ways in which the BBC can offer trusted and accessible news to children and help them navigate a changing news landscape.

High quality news is valuable in a changing news landscape

Mis- and dis-information is becoming more prevalent

Ofcom's report on News Consumption in the UK shows that the BBC, across its own services on TV, radio and online, has the highest reach of any news provider, reaching 39% of 12 to 15 year olds.

However, the report also cites TikTok (31%), YouTube (30%), Instagram (24%) and Facebook (21%) as the most-used individual access points for news. These services host news from other providers, which may include established news brands such as the BBC, but will also likely include less trusted sources of news.⁵⁹

An Ofcom review of literature on mis- and dis-information suggests that social media is a key source of mis- and dis-information.⁶⁰ In addition, many young people are receiving mis-information from peers: a recent survey in the UK found that 1 in 4 young respondents (described in the report as 'Gen Z') admitted to sharing misinformation in the past 6 months.⁶¹

⁵⁹ News consumption in the UK (2025) Ofcom, page 6 <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/online-research/adult-and-teen-news-consumption-survey/news-consumption-in-the-uk-2025-research-findings.pdf?v=400636>

⁶⁰ Misinformation and Disinformation: Literature Review (2025); Ofcom <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/mis-and-disinformation/misinformation-and-disinformation-literature-review.pdf?v=397787>

⁶¹ Misinformation and Disinformation: Literature Review (2025); Ofcom; Page 6, <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/mis-and-disinformation/misinformation-and-disinformation-literature-review.pdf?v=397787> Based on Adobe, 2024. Adobe Future of Trust Study Narrative (UK), published 18 April 2024





The growing trend of mis- and dis-information online is making it harder for children to discern the truth. The Children's Wellbeing in a Digital World report 2025 finds that over 40% of children have "seen things you think aren't true" online.⁶² The same research shows that over a quarter of children have believed a fake or AI-generated news story.⁶³

Research from Ofcom's Children's Media Lives report corroborates this: it is a challenge for children to work out what is true online.⁶⁴

If children cannot distinguish between real and fake information and therefore grow up with an inaccurate and fragmented view of the world, then this is a risk to social cohesion. The BBC has a role to play in countering that risk through impartial and accurate news reporting to its audience, including children.

Children trust news and education providers more than social media

In terms of providing trustworthy news stories, Ofcom's News Consumption Survey finds that 12-15-year-olds also rate traditional platforms more highly than online sources. 52% of this age group said that social media provided trustworthy news stories. In comparison, 82% said TV was trustworthy for news stories whilst 78% said the same for news on radio. However, trust in news on social media is rising among this age group, with a significant increase from last year (45% in 2024, 52% in 2025).⁶⁵

The Children's Media Literacy research mirrors these findings: children aged 8-17 years old remain more sceptical about the information what they see on social media compared with what they say on news or educational sites. Of the children surveyed:

- Three-quarters (74%) say that either all or most of the information they see on sites used for schoolwork is true; and
- Almost two-thirds (63%) say this about the information found on news sites.
- However, a third (35%) say that either all or most of the information they see on social media is true.⁶⁶

62 Children's wellbeing in a digital world; (2025); Internet Matters; Page 24, <https://www.flipsnack.com/internetmattersorg/children-s-wellbeing-in-a-digital-world-2025-internet-matters/full-view.html>

63 Understanding the impact of news on children's wellbeing (2025); Internet Matters; Page 7, <https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/research/impact-online-news-childrens-wellbeing/>

64 Children's Media Lives (2025) Ofcom, page 3 <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/children/childrens-media-lives-2025/childrens-media-lives-2025-summary-report.pdf?v=396299>

65 News consumption in the UK (2025) Ofcom, page 6

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/online-research/adult-and-teen-news-consumption-survey/news-consumption-in-the-uk-2025-research-findings.pdf?v=400636>

66 Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report (2025); Ofcom; Page 44

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/children/childrens-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2025/childrens-media-literacy-report-2025.pdf?v=396621>



Academic research suggests that young people's scepticism associated with information they see online is driving them towards traditional news providers.⁶⁷ Teenagers look to traditional and regulated media for fact-checking and this serves as an important antidote to online misinformation for teenagers.

This is backed up by DCMS research on the value of BBC news.⁶⁸ The research suggests that younger people feel particularly vulnerable to misinformation. Audiences find that reputable and regulated news providers, specifically the BBC, have a crucial role in verifying information they have seen from less reputable sources.

There are positive impacts of children consuming high quality news

Evidence from academia demonstrates how increasing news literacy and an interest in news in children can drive civic engagement as they grow up.⁶⁹ Further research finds that young people with higher levels of civic engagement have positive association with higher incomes, education levels and better mental health outcomes later in life.⁷⁰ Therefore exposure to high quality, impartial news, alongside news verification and media literacy content, is associated with a positive impact on quality of life and better social outcomes.

Research shows that children are interested in news, but that they want to participate in news that is suitable for them. BBC research shows that over 60% of children aged 7-16 years old are very or at least 'a bit' interested in the news.^{71 72}



According to their parents, the BBC is the top-ranked place to go to keep up with news and current affairs.⁷³ The BBC is currently delivering for these audiences and has ambition to fulfil the needs of children and continue delivering for them in the future. The BBC does this in two ways: through its dedicated news show for younger children, *Newsround*, and through making BBC News accessible to all.

67 Selnes F. N. (2024); Fake news on social media: Understanding teens' (Dis)engagement with news; <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/01634437231198447>

68 Value of BBC News (2025); Department for Culture, Media and Sport; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/value-of-bbc-news/value-of-bbc-news>

69 NewsWise in Primary Education: News Literacy and Civic Engagement (2024); National Literacy Trust <https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/project/news-literacy-and-civic-engagement/>

70 Ballard P. J. et al (2018); Impacts of Adolescent and Young Adult Civic Engagement on Health and Socioeconomic Status in Adulthood <https://kids.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/854/2018/03/cdev12998.pdf>

71 BBC-commissioned research, Newsround and iPlayer (2023); sample size 1,500

72 Slavtcheva-Petkova V. (2025); "If you don't ask, you don't get": Placing children at the centre of public service and news media <https://livrepository.liverpool.ac.uk/3191155/1/Accepted%20version%20before%20proofs.pdf>

73 BBC-commissioned research by DJS Research (2026); sample size 2,502



Newsround is a source of reliable news for children

Newsround is the BBC's flagship news show dedicated to providing news for young children. *Newsround* was originally commissioned in 1972 (known as *John Craven's Newsround*) to give children news in a way that was relevant for their lives and simple to understand. The programme was designed for children to hear about stories that were important to them.

"If they hear it from *Newsround*, they hear it in a way that is properly balanced, that gives the correct amount of reassurance and in a way that they can trust."

Lizo Mzimba, Newsround presenter 1998 – 2008

Feedback from children is positive, describing *Newsround* as "interesting, unique, exciting, fun and easy to understand" whilst remaining "short and concise".⁷⁴ Similarly, feedback from teachers is also positive, with many of them using it in their classroom to supplement their subject, or to help provide children with a rounded view of the world.

"[*Newsround*] is a really great, digestible site to use"

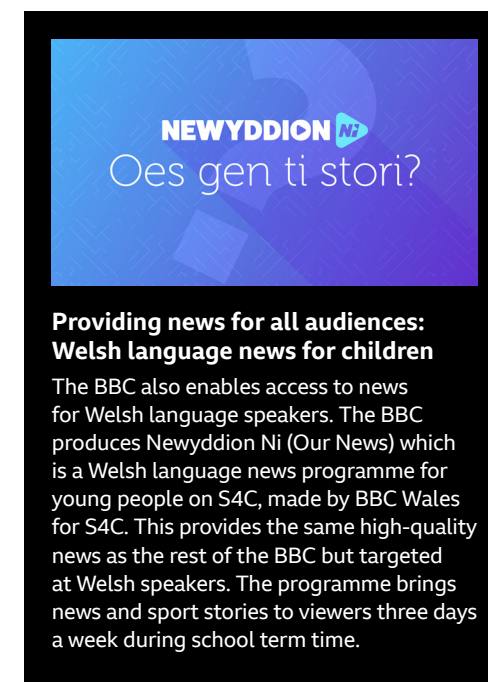
Female, English teacher in South West England

Newsround has been a feature of linear TV for over 50 years and, more recently, a mainstay of on-demand watching. However, *Newsround* is also finding its audience in new ways, thanks to an increase in use by schools where it is shown in classrooms and during assemblies. During term time in the 2024/25 school year *Newsround* reached 3.5m children every week.⁷⁵

Some children may not get access to the news and current world events at home but, by showing the daily *Newsround* bulletin in schools, impartial and unbiased news is able to reach a diverse and collective audience, and counter inaccurate news sources. *Newsround* is also reaching children online: BBC analysis estimates that there are around 500,000 weekly unique visitors to the *Newsround* website.

"It's really important for them to see what's going on in the world, because a lot of them won't be keeping abreast of what's happening"

Male, Design and Technology teacher in North West England



Providing news for all audiences: Welsh language news for children

The BBC also enables access to news for Welsh language speakers. The BBC produces *Newyddion Ni* (Our News) which is a Welsh language news programme for young people on S4C, made by BBC Wales for S4C. This provides the same high-quality news as the rest of the BBC but targeted at Welsh speakers. The programme brings news and sport stories to viewers three days a week during school term time.

⁷⁴ BBC-commissioned research, *Newsround* and iPlayer (2023); sample size 1,500

⁷⁵ Estimate based on web traffic to the *Newsround* 'watch bulletin' on [newsround.co.uk](https://www.bbc.com/newsround) during term time and school hours (8-4pm to incorporate viewing in breakfast clubs and after school care). Multiplied by average class size (27 – Department for Education, school census)



The BBC is aiming to reach audiences where they are, particularly in spaces where unsubstantiated stories can proliferate. The daily *Newsround* bulletin has been published on YouTube since March 2025, there are *Newsround* stories created for use on TikTok during the 2024 General Election, a *Newsround* guide to the election process was created as part of the BBC's Wonder Chase experience within gaming platform Roblox.

Newsround is the most trusted source of news for children aged 7 to 12 and reaches up to older children too – it is the second most trusted source for children aged 13 to 16 (behind BBC News).⁷⁶ Parents also trust *Newsround*. When asked which news provider parents trust most to deliver suitable news content for their child, *Newsround* was the top-ranked news provider: 78% of parents think *Newsround* is good or very good at delivering suitable news content for their child.

“*Newsround* present current events in a safe, age-appropriate way, avoiding scary or misleading information. My kid has become more interested in what’s happening in the world. It has helped improve their listening and understanding skills, and encouraged curiosity about current events.” Male parent, 35-44, 1 child, South East England

Looking forward, the BBC’s strategy for children’s news is to be increasingly present in places where children are gathering news, such as online platforms, and in places where children are learning about the world. This requires government to coordinate between the BBC, and other PSB providers of accessible news, with the places where children access online content.

BBC news content is accessible to children

The value that children get from *BBC News* does not just come through *Newsround*. Daytime news programmes, such as *BBC Breakfast* and the *BBC News at 6*, have strong reach with children. BARB 2024/25 data shows that 65% of children’s broadcaster news viewing time is with BBC. This is because children value *BBC News*: *BBC News* is the source of news most trusted by older children (aged 13 to 16) and rated the second most trusted source of news by younger children (aged 7 to 12) behind *Newsround*.⁷⁷

The *BBC News* coverage (including *Newsround*) is highly trusted because of its commitment to impartiality and strict editorial guidelines. The BBC’s editorial standards means that all content must adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth.⁷⁸

Children are able to engage with BBC News because it is designed to be inclusive for all audiences. Compared with other mainstream TV news providers, *BBC News* coverage is most

associated with being able to ‘explain coverage in a way that I understand’, with around 75% of adult consumers associating *BBC News* with that quality. For some topics, such as money, work and the economy, that metric is even higher (at an average of 84%).

Ofcom’s 2025 research of News Consumption in the UK asked 12-to-15 year olds what was their most important source of news and what organisations they used to follow the news. On both metrics, the BBC was the top-ranked organisation. Other qualitative research makes similar findings: Public First’s focus group research into young secondary school children found that children “trusted their parents and the BBC far more than any other source”.⁷⁹

Parents tend to agree that *BBC News* has value for children. *BBC News* is ranked as the most trusted source of news for older children and is the second most trusted source of news (behind *Newsround*) for younger children. *BBC News* is also the second highest quality news provision for children (behind *Newsround*).

76 BBC-commissioned research, *Newsround* and iPlayer (2023); sample size 1,500

77 BBC-commissioned research, *Newsround* and iPlayer (2023); sample size 1,500

78 BBC Editorial Standards <https://www.bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidelines/editorial-standards/>

79 Public First (2025), *Britain’s first 16-year-old voters: how today’s Year 8s see politics* <https://www.publicfirst.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/16-year-old-voters-report.pdf>

Annex

Bitesize earnings impact

Calculating the earnings impact on GCSE and National 5s students

The economic impact of *BBC Bitesize* is focused on one cohort of children (15-16 year olds taking GCSE and National 5s) where *BBC Bitesize* is likely to have the biggest impact on educational outcomes. This means estimating the number of children who have reached a better grade because of *BBC Bitesize* and multiplying that by the lifetime earnings uplift from achieving a better grade. The estimate draws on research published by the Department for Education on the impact of GCSE attainment on lifetime earnings to estimate the impact of *BBC Bitesize* on lifetime earnings.

Number of *Bitesize* users at GCSE and National 5 level

The BBC has taken surveys of children after they have received exam results and asked children about their grades, the education resources used and what helped them get their results. These surveys suggest that, of the GCSE and Nationals pupils that used *Bitesize* (around 42% of all students), 71% reported that *Bitesize* “helped me achieve better grades”. That implies around 30% of all GCSE/Nationals students found *Bitesize* contributed to achieving better grades. That equates to around 350,000 children every year.

Number of frequent and intensive *Bitesize* users

It is likely that better grades cannot be completely attributed to *Bitesize* for several reasons. Primarily, *BBC Bitesize* users may be more engaged in education already and may use other resources in conjunction.

To account for this, it is possible to observe the proportion of *Bitesize* users that are frequent users (i.e. access *Bitesize* two or more times a week). This is on average 15% of users throughout the year, rising to 19% of users during exam periods. Using the more conservative estimate, just over 50,000 GCSE and National 5s students use *Bitesize* regularly and intensively (with the remaining students using *Bitesize* less intensively and regularly).

Number of students with better grades because of *Bitesize*

Similarly, self-reported surveys are potentially flawed. Many of these students also attribute better grades to other learning resources as well as *Bitesize*. To calculate the number of children who have reached a better grade because of *BBC Bitesize* it is possible to analyse the difference in return exam grades versus expected grades for *Bitesize* users versus non-*Bitesize* users. 59% of *Bitesize* users beat their expected grades whilst 45% of non-*Bitesize* users beat their expected grades. The implication is that the incremental impact of using *Bitesize* (aside from a general improvement in grades) is better results for an additional 14% of pupils.

Assuming that only frequent *Bitesize* users get enough educational impact to beat their expected grade, which acts as a conservative assumption, around 7,500 students who have frequently used *Bitesize* and have received a higher grade at GCSE or National 5 as a result.

Calculating the impact in earning of *Bitesize*

The increase in discounted lifetime earnings as a direct result of using *Bitesize* for these pupils is based on research from the Department for Education. They estimated the present value of increased lifetime earnings for students who took GCSEs in 2001-2004 associated with an increase in one GCSE grade is £8,500.⁸⁰ Multiply that by 7,500 students who received a higher grade because of *Bitesize*, the final estimate is that *Bitesize* contributed an additional future lifetime earnings boost of over £80 million for GCSE and National 5 students in the UK.

Caveats to the estimate

There are several caveats with this analysis which may mean the lifetime earnings impact is different to this estimate.

The annual lifetime earnings impact estimated is based on students who took GCSEs in 2001-2004. It is likely that the marginal impact of educational attainment on earnings has changed since then: the past is not necessarily a guide to the future.

There is significant variation in earnings uplift associated with different subjects. For example, an uplifted grade in maths has a higher earnings impact than an uplifted grade in music.

Similarly, there is a difference in earnings uplift by gender, with male students having a larger uplift than female students.

The marginal return varies with the grade boundary: for example, the greatest marginal returns are associated with moving from grade D to grade C. However, *Bitesize* content typically aims at this standard of pupil, precisely because it has the largest impact.

It is not possible to distinguish the human capital impact associated with improved knowledge and skills versus the signalling impact of an improved grade.

The wider impact of *Bitesize* as a benchmark for quality in the education sector means other providers are incentivised to provide better services. This means the spillover impacts of *Bitesize* are not likely to be captured in this estimate.

Similarly, there are many students who have received a better grade in part because of using *Bitesize*. Not all of the lifetime earnings impact can be attributed to *Bitesize*, but it has some complementary effect on increasing earnings.

Wellbeing impact from Children's TV

The wellbeing impact of children TV's draws on the wellbeing estimates associated with creative and cultural activities, Frontier Economics' estimates on the value of creative and cultural activities and BBC estimates on the role of the BBC in encouraging creative and cultural activities through its programming.

- There are around 4.2 million children aged 10-14 in the UK, based on the ONS estimates.
- BBC survey of parents finds that around 8% of parents are highly engaged with the BBC.
- Assuming that parental engagement is independent of their child's age, the implication is that around 339,000 children aged 10-14 have parents who are highly engaged with the BBC.

BBC research suggests that:

- the proportion of highly engaged parents reporting that BBC "Inspired creative expression through arts or crafts (e.g., drawing, painting, making things)" is 63%; and
- the proportion of highly engaged parents reporting that BBC "Inspired creative expression through music or singing (e.g., singing, performing, musical creativity)" is also 63%
- Therefore around 214,000 children aged 10-14 are using the BBC to inspire creative expression through art and music.
- Using the appropriate value of culture from Frontier Economics' study, the wellbeing impact associated with these children listening to music and playing music to be over £14 million per year and the wellbeing impact associated with artistic expression to be around £29 million per year.

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