



Commissioning Brief



44' DRAMA SINGLES (SUMMER 2026)

Programmes for transmission April 2027-March 2028

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SECTION A: EDITORIAL OPPORTUNITY

Commissioning Brief ID / Title: 47019-99 / 44' Drama Singles (Summer 2026)

Commissioning Owner	Alison Hindell Commissioning Editor, Drama & Fiction
Commissioning Contact	Sharon Terry sharon.terry@bbc.co.uk
Commissioning Brief Title	44' Drama Singles (Summer 2026)
Network	Radio 4 & BBC Sounds
Guide Price	£23,450 per episode
Genre	Drama
Duration	44'
Transmission Period	April 2027 – March 2028
Slot Day	Tues-Thurs
Slot Time	1415-1500

Important Points to Note:

- The majority of opportunities in this round will go to **experienced directors and producers** with a demonstrable track record in producing audio drama for the BBC or other outlets and who have produced or directed commissions won in their own name within the last three years
- If you are new to Radio 4, or have yet to win a drama commission, please include your **production credits (with dates) and experience** in the 'Production Experience' section in PiCoS
- Offers will be capped at **4 per producer**. More than 4 will not be considered. If you are offering across a range of companies, your total should still be no more than 4

- Proposals from **New Makers** (i.e., production companies new to Radio 4) may also be submitted, however we are not ring-fencing opportunities in this round. So you will need to have strong credentials and there will be a cap of **two** ideas per New Maker
- We will require a full **sample script** for all first-time writers, **at full proposal stage only**
- If you have not made a drama for Radio 4 before you will also need to provide an **mp3 sample** of your work **at full proposal stage**
- All proposals must be submitted via **PiCoS**. You can find details about the system [here](#)
- Proposals can only be submitted by **registered suppliers**. You can find details about how to register [here](#)

1. About Radio 4

Drama is an important genre for Radio 4. There is drama on Radio 4 every afternoon of the week, and we know that our listeners love the wide range of styles, treatments and stories, from the Sunday Drama to Limelight, the Afternoon Drama to The Archers.

We live in interesting times. Political, social and cultural upheaval, combined with disinformation, polarisation and fragmentation, mean Radio 4 has a vital role to play in helping the audience navigate and understand the world around them. This means that drama is more valuable than ever for our audience. It can be a brilliant and surprising way to engage listeners on difficult or complex subjects, and simultaneously inform, educate and entertain them.

Our mission is to introduce listeners to ideas, perspectives and experiences that broaden their horizons, take them to new lands, and, occasionally, provide a safe haven in which they can shelter from the grim state of the world.

All of this needs to come wrapped up in world class storytelling, with world class writing, acting, producing and directing. However, if the Reithian mission for Radio 4 is reassuringly constant, the manner in which we capture people's imaginations and draw them into our world should be constantly evolving.

Always remember, in everything we do, we have a responsibility to reflect the whole of the UK and the rich, varied and changing lives of the people living here. We must be a broad church, giving voice to experiences, viewpoints and perspectives that come from all corners of the country. Sometimes that's about telling the stories of those that are less featured in the modern media and looking to represent all points of the social, political and geographic compass, *even those views which might not necessarily chime with your own*. Can you pitch us Adolescence a year *before* everyone is pitching us stories about young men and masculinity, not after?

Radio 4 is the biggest speech station in the world. We commission nearly 8,000 new programmes and podcasts every year, chosen from the thousands of offers submitted to our commissioners. So competition is, rightly, fierce. However, in an ever-crowded landscape and with growing pressures on the linear schedule, we need to let new audiences know about the wonders of audio drama (specifically the joy of the single play) so be ambitious with writers and actors ... give us something we can sing from the rooftops!

None of us know what will come next in this turbulent world, but one thing is certain: brilliant, original ideas with great talent, a clever treatment and real ambition will always be cherished by our audience.

We look forward to your ideas.

Good luck!

Mohit Bakaya
Director, BBC Speech Audio
Controller, BBC Radio 4 & Radio 4 Extra

2. The Opportunity

The 44' Drama slot is made up of roughly a 50:50 mix of series/serials and single plays. With this brief, we are commissioning single plays only (series and serials are being commissioned through the main spring round) for broadcast during 2027/2028.

In uncertain times, drama and story-telling are needed all the more, from pieces that can help decode the contemporary world to stories that distract us from reality, offering joy, comfort and flights of the imagination.

Stories in this slot will be primarily set in the present day but we want you to use the liberation provided by audio to dream up ambitious audio worlds housing imaginatively conceived dramas that offer a wide range of theme, subject, setting and style.

We want ideas that are pioneering in subject matter and innovative in form; stories showing recognisable, ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances; stories that inspire, illuminate, thrill and transcend the everyday, and that transport us through the particular to the universal.

We want ideas that are provocative (but not gratuitous) within the frame of Radio 4 and that extend the canon of audio drama - and not just repeat it. Despite these times of financial challenge, we should not play safe or be afraid to tell new kinds of stories. That said, these dramas continue to be broadcast at 14.15 on weekday afternoons and, while we know that a lot of listening is via streaming at other times of day, it is still important that your proposal bears that timeslot in mind.

Here are some points to consider:

- We are looking for new, original writing that captures a writer's particular voice
- In this slot we are *not* looking for adaptations from other sources, with the possible exception of a few first-time writers whose scripts for other media merit being put before a bigger audience
- BBC Radio Drama has always championed the development of new talent and this year is no different. The nurturing and cultivation of new voices is essential to the BBC's mission and Radio 4 will continue to invest in the future of the genre, and the future of dramatic writing in the UK more broadly, by commissioning a significant number of new writers.
- And we continue to seek ideas from more established big hitters, aiming to offer between the two groups a tantalising mix of subject, idea and story. Whether new, emerging or established, what's important is world-class talent
- You can tell a big story in 44 minutes but it needs focus in terms of cast size and clarity in structure
- In a world where many seek escape from the headlines, a range of tone is very important: we will not shy away from difficult subjects but, with tougher pieces, we should offer redemption and hope as well as catharsis
- If your writer has not written for us before, and if their idea is shortlisted, you will need to provide a sample script of their writing as supporting material. This should be a script either for the idea in question or a script that best represents the author's style and aptitude for this new idea
- **Please do not submit scripts at short proposal stage as they will not be read**
- We have ring-fenced a small number of slots for ideas that offer value for money at prices below the guide price. If that can be achieved through innovative approaches to genre, production approach or casting, we are interested to hear how
- The best of British storytelling is a key objective for the BBC as a whole and Radio 4 plays a significant part with dramas that reflect a wide range of UK locations. We are looking for ideas from the whole of the UK geographically and, in particular, we would like more ideas that reflect all sides of the various social and political divides in the UK today
- But whatever the theme, the idea should be led by character and story, and not by an issue onto which ciphers are attached

- We will continue to commissioning a small number of reactive dramas which will be agreed only a few weeks ahead of broadcast date and would appreciate expressions of interest from producers who have both the experience and the flexibility to work in this way. If you are interested, your proposal should suggest writers who would work well in these circumstances and should also reference any track record you may have in this area. We do not need you to provide story ideas at this stage for this type of commission. This reactive slot is not an opening for New Makers

We look forward to reading your ideas.

Alison Hindell
Commissioning Editor, Drama & Fiction

3. Compliance and BBC Editorial Guidelines

You will be required to deliver programmes that are in line with the BBC's Editorial Guidelines and be able to adapt to the BBC's changing editorial and business needs during the period of the commission.

4. Risk Management

If there are any significant risks in your proposal – editorial risks, safety or business continuity risks – let us know, in your full proposal, how you plan to manage them.

5. Music Policy

All the proposals commissioned in this slot will need to align with the BBC's music policy. The policy is available [here](#).

6. Sustainability

The BBC is committed to informing and inspiring listeners about how they, as individuals, can take steps towards more sustainable living. Your proposal should consider how the editorial and production methods contribute towards the BBC's Net Zero strategy – you can read about this [here](#). Where appropriate, sustainability should be woven into the editorial – either implicitly or explicitly. Production methods should demonstrate good practice – minimising negative environmental impacts (e.g. from energy, waste, travel) and, where possible, making a positive contribution. For further information, please discuss sustainability with the Commissioning Editor and see our Radio Commissioning site [here](#).

7. Generative Artificial Intelligence

The BBC has issued Information and Guiding Principles to ensure the responsible use of Generative AI technology in BBC programmes. Is there (or might there be) any proposed use of Generative AI in the production and delivery of the programme which may require transparency in order to comply with the BBC's Principles and Guidance? If yes, please discuss with your commissioning editor at pitch stage and include details in your full proposal.

SECTION B: PROCESS, ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

1. Short Proposal and Shortlisting

Step 1: Short Proposal

Complete your short proposal in PiCoS. Please ensure in good time that, as a registered supplier, you have access to PiCoS. The PiCoS team can help with any issues PiCoS.support@bbc.co.uk.

- Enter your proposal in the **'Short Proposal'** section in PiCoS before the deadline on **Thurs 18 June 12 noon**
- Your Short Proposal should be no more than **300 words**. Although PiCoS will allow more, **proposals that exceed this limit will be rejected**.
- Observe the cap on numbers (a maximum of 4 proposals per producer and a cap of 2 proposals per New Maker).
- Include production credits and experience in the **'Production Experience'** section in PiCoS **if the producer or production company is new to Radio 4**

Step 2: Shortlisting notification

You will be notified of the outcome of Stage 1. Short Proposals will be either Rejected or Awaiting Full Proposal. No feedback will be provided for unsuccessful proposals at this stage.

2. Full Proposal

Producers will be invited to provide a Full Proposal, via PiCoS, responding to this commissioning brief, which includes all the elements outlined in Section D ("Full Proposals"). There will be no pitching meetings in this round, but we are happy to answer questions by email to sharon.terry@bbc.co.uk.

- Enter your proposal in the **'Full Proposal'** section in PiCoS before the deadline on **Thurs 10 Sept 12 noon**
- Your Full Proposal should not exceed **1200 words**. Although PiCoS will allow more, **proposals that exceed this limit will be rejected**.
- Please email relevant **supporting material** to sharon.terry@bbc.co.uk (a full sample script for all first-time writers, and a link to an mp3 sample of your work if you have not made a drama for Radio 4 before).
- Any supporting material should be accompanied by a completed inventory form (Appendix 1)

3. Evaluation

We will evaluate all full proposals against the editorial brief and commission those which most successfully fulfil the brief. Commissioning decisions will be communicated in PiCoS. Brief feedback for rejected proposals will be given there. At any stage of the process, we may need to come back to you to seek clarification. Your answers will be factored into the evaluation process as appropriate.

4. Conditional commission awarded

Confirmation of all titles is conditional on the issues listed below. Radio 4 is not responsible for any costs incurred prior to full agreement. There will be important information included in the feedback field in PiCoS which will not be communicated through other means so it is vital that you take time to read and share it with colleagues.

5. Conditions of commission

Price

Each conditional commission will be accompanied by a price based on what you have requested in your full proposal and judged as value for money by the commissioning, finance and business teams. If you wish to challenge the offer made, a detailed budget will be requested and evaluated by our finance and business teams with the aim of reaching agreement. Conditional acceptance may be withdrawn if agreement is not reached within a reasonable period. For offers that exceed the guide price, please explain why the additional budget is needed in your full proposal. For offers at or below the guide price, we do not require any budget or financial information as it is assumed you can deliver the programme you are pitching at the guide price.

Rights

Radio 4 requires programmes to be contracted under the [Audio Terms of Trade](#). This will vary only in exceptional circumstances. Proposals with co-production funding will be welcomed.

Schedule and delivery dates

Delivery dates will be very important and should be realistic and achievable. Offers that can be delivered for early in the commissioning year 2027/2028 will be considered favourably, and you are advised to spread your delivery dates

evenly across the year. If an idea is commissioned and then cannot be delivered for the date promised, it is possible that the commission will be cancelled.

We are unlikely to issue precise transmission dates for programmes not pegged to a particular anniversary or season but will give the calendar quarter in which we intend to place them. Precise transmission and delivery dates will be confirmed well before the start of each calendar quarter. We will use your given delivery dates to schedule commissioned programmes, but there will be instances where we will want programmes earlier. If it's the case that you cannot deliver to meet the given transmission quarter, notify Elaine Boyd (Scheduling Manager) elaine.boyd@bbc.co.uk and Richard Culver richard.culver@bbc.co.uk (Head of Planning & Scheduling) within 14 days of results publication.

Editorial

A conditional acceptance might have specific editorial conditions attached to it, e.g. that a particular actor is available. Fulfilment of them must be confirmed before the commission is finalised and before you start work. If they turn out to be unavailable we may accept a substitute but this must be agreed with the commissioning team.

Delivery

Too many programmes go unsung because programme descriptions and audio are not delivered in time to hit our press and promotion deadlines. If your programmes are commissioned these **must** be delivered by the deadlines we give you.

6. Feedback

Feedback will be given in PiCoS for all full proposals.

SECTION C: THE COMMISSIONING TIMETABLE

The commissioning process for this opportunity consists of a number of stages set out in the timetable below:

Stage	Timings (all midday)	Activities
Commissioning Brief published	wc 11 May	Publication of commissioning brief documentation and round opens in PiCoS.
Short Proposal and shortlisting	Thurs 18 June 12 noon	Deadline for Short Proposal to be submitted via PiCoS.
	w/c 13 July	Suppliers shortlisted, notified of outcomes and asked to prepare a Full Proposal.
Full Proposal and shortlisting	Thurs 10 Sept 12 noon	Deadline for Full Proposal to be submitted via PiCoS. Evaluation team shortlists Full Proposals.
Conditional Commission and Contract	Late October	Commission award decision made, commissioning specification completed and contract issued.
		Agreement of all programme related deliverables and technical specifications (for further information on requirements, please see the BBC's commissioning website). Full contract signed.
Feedback		Feedback provided in PiCoS.

We will assess your proposal according to this timetable. **Late submissions cannot be accepted.**

If you have any questions about this commissioning brief that need answering before you submit your Short Proposal, please ensure you email them to Sharon Terry sharon.terry@bbc.co.uk by Weds 17 June at the latest.

SECTION D: FULL PROPOSALS AND REFERENCE INFORMATION

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the requirements contained in this commissioning brief and on the commissioning website. Proposals not complying may be rejected by the Commissioner whose decision in this matter will be final.

All the information required, except for supporting materials, should be included in the **(maximum) 1200 words** of your proposal.

The BBC reserves the right at any time prior to award of a commission, and without incurring any liability to the affected suppliers, to accept or reject any proposal, or to annul the commissioning process, rejecting all proposals.

More information relating to all commissioning briefs and rounds, regardless of station, can be found on the [Pitching ideas](#) page of the Radio commissioning website.

APPENDIX 1: SUPPORTING MATERIAL FORM

Please email a completed inventory of supporting material to sharon.terry@bbc.co.uk by **5pm on Thurs 10 Sept 2026**.

BBC DEPARTMENT / INDIE COMPANY	Please enter the title of your company / department here	
COMMISSIONING BRIEF	PROPOSAL	SUPPORTING MATERIAL
47019 – 44’ Drama	Please enter the title of your proposal here	SCRIPT: Please enter the title of your script here (PDFs or Word docs should be sent to sharon.terry@bbc.co.uk) MP3: Please enter the title of any mp3 here (You can send mp3s via Dropbox to sharon.terry@bbc.co.uk)