

BBC Sounds commissioning brief – Autumn 2025

Editorial brief

We want to commission distinctive habit-driving titles that we can build, with suppliers and presenters, into successful long-running brands that appeal beyond BBC's heartland radio listenership i.e. reaching lighter users of the BBC who are weekly podcast listeners. We want to find up to four titles that the BBC can back as being their biggest new on-demand audio brands by Summer 2026, up to two which could be visualised.

As of June 2025, BBC Sounds has a weekly audience average of 4.8 million users across all devices, including the app and smart speaker devices, and continues to grow with an impressive 14.5% yearly increase in plays across all content. With over 80,000 hours of content and a broad and mixed on-demand slate that caters to a range of audiences, from groundbreaking journalism (e.g. *Marianna In Conspiracy Land*, *To Catch A Scorpion*, *Stalked*), bingeable boxsets or narrative storytelling (e.g. *Gangster*, *Assume Nothing*) to network-defining podcast brands that have dominated the charts (e.g. *You're Dead To Me*, *Uncanny*, *What's Up Docs?*, *The Martin Lewis Podcast*).

Recently we've increased commissioning that appeals to weekly podcast listeners who are less frequent users of the BBC (e.g. *Miss Me? Murder They Wrote*, *The Wayne Rooney Show*, *Fame Under Fire*). This has gone hand in hand with expanding our slate visually on YouTube and iPlayer (e.g. *The Tooney & Russo Show* and *Traitors Uncloaked*).

This round is about adding to that growing slate of podcasts (audio-only and visualised) - on-demand first without schedule requirements, targeting a new generation of listeners through headline-grabbing and talkable content that becomes part of their weekly listening.

The focus of this round is primarily audio-first ideas that bring new listeners to Sounds but we are happy to receive complementary video podcast treatments which both grow Sounds and work for U35 audiences on either YouTube or iPlayer. Audio-only and audio-visual treatments will both be considered.

We are looking for ideas that:

1. Push the boundaries of the BBC's genre specialisms and how they're presented but still fit with our platform, brand and mission.
2. Feature faces and voices, emerging or established, that could redefine what the BBC means in audio for the next 5 years i.e. who is the next....?
3. Are original creative formats, beyond interview shows, that appeal to U45 light users of the BBC who love podcasts
4. Build a strong community, fandom, talkability and weekly listening with an ambition to be a top 10 podcast in UK on Sounds & RSS

Based on audience research, listeners want to thrive amidst an age of adjustment... they want content that provides:

- ✓ New definitions of home, adulthood and success
- ✓ Realities, not stereotypes
- ✓ Fresh perspective on the world that challenge their thinking
- ✓ Tools and ideas that improve their lives

Examples of successful programming we've had in this space on BBC Sounds include:

- [Miss Me?](#)
- [Murder They Wrote](#)
- [Elis James & John Robins](#)
- [Uncanny](#)
- [What's Up Docs?](#)
- [The Wayne Rooney Show](#)
- [You About?](#)

We would expect pitches to have considered the BBC's [editorial sustainability](#) and [creative diversity](#) strategies and requirements.

Eligibility criteria

Part 1: Production Eligibility & Experience

We require a production team with a demonstrable understanding and expertise in making audio content and evidence of commitment to expanding onto other platforms e.g. social media. Please list three projects which support your eligibility.

Part 2: Partnerships (complete this part only if you plan to submit a proposal as part of a partnership)

Please describe the responsibilities each partner will take.

Please indicate the lead company with whom the BBC will contract.

Please include the key personnel responsible for the production and delivery of the programme and details of the partnering company they are currently contracted to.

How to pitch

The deadline for initial ideas and eligibility information is 11 December.

Proposal should be submitted via the **PiCoS submission system** and include:

- Select 'OD Sounds Speech' network – and then brief number: 10913-60000
- Response to the Production Eligibility questionnaire (up to 500 words)
- An editorial proposal of which summarises the idea (up to 500 words)

- Confirmation of the location of your existing substantive base, noting that we are aiming for 50% of spend from this opportunity to go to production companies with a substantive base outside of London
- Note: for this opportunity suppliers can submit a maximum of two ideas for consideration.

Timings

- Deadline for initial ideas and eligibility information – 11 December 2025
- Outcome communicated – Jan 2026
- Face-to-face pitches may take place with shortlisted suppliers – Feb 2026
- Development/commission ideas - Q4 25/26 (Jan 26–Mar 26)
- Production/delivery – Q1 26/27 (Apr 26–Jun 26)
- Launch - Summer/Autumn 26

Evaluation process

- After assessing the eligibility criteria, we will consider the editorial submission.
- A small number of shortlisted production companies may be invited to pitch
- Production companies will then be selected for paid development (secondary development)
- Owing to the level of interest expected, we will be unable to provide feedback on unsuccessful ideas

Areas that will be considered when evaluating pitches will include editorial proposal and capability, diversity and inclusion, planning management and production capacity, location, value for money and risk.

Tariff

Tariffs for this round will be dependent on treatment, presenter, and ambition of idea.

We will greenlight ideas within a tariff range that is comparable with our current slate and competitive in market. This is £7-15k per episode audio only, inclusive of presenter fee, and we will expect to negotiate on visualisation costs.

Distribution and contracting

These titles will be commissioned under the [Audio Terms of Trade](#) (unless otherwise agreed). Commissions will be conditional on independent producers granting commercial rights to the BBC.

Independent producers will be encouraged to look at the updated Audio Release Policy (soon to be published). The BBC is open to considering early release of these titles if they meet the criteria set out within the Audio Release Policy.