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Response to Ofcom's Second PSB Review

Phase One: The Digital Opportunity

1. Introduction

Ofcom has asked how well public service broadcasters are delivering the Public Purposes.

I responded to Ofcom's October discussion paper on children's television in December 2007. Following painstaking analysis of feedback to BBC children's TV and websites I was able to show that the BBC was surreptitiously discriminating against teenagers and LGBT people.

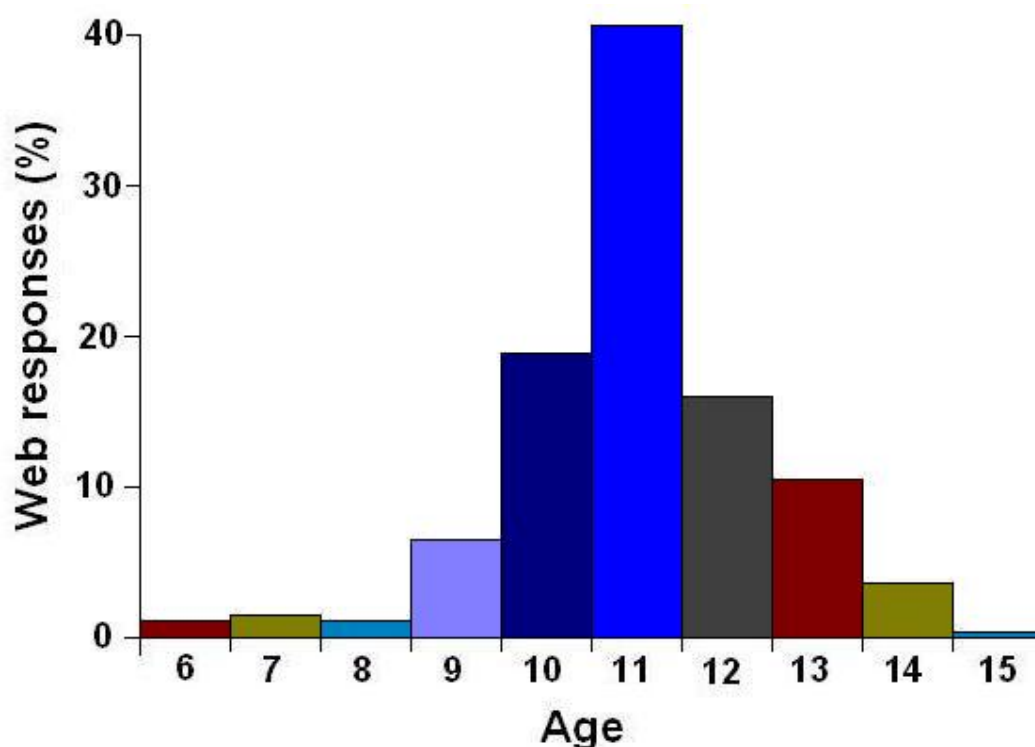
This response concentrates on the BBC's poor delivery of the Public Purposes to young people in Britain.

2. Where have all the teens gone?

On 12 May 2008 BBC kids' news programme Newsround included a report about SATs (school tests), and asked its viewers "How do YOU feel about Sats tests?"

http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_7390000/newsid_7392900/7392927.stm

A total of 281 responses were published, 276 from individuals and 5 from school classes. Taking a closer look at individuals' responses only:-



Newsround's question elicited a much larger (published) feedback than is usual. But what makes this feedback so interesting is that it shows a very marked difference in the proportion of responses from 11 year-olds (40.6%) compared to responses from 14 year-olds (3.6%), many of whom had taken their SATs exams only one week earlier.

So the question is why was the difference so great?

One possible answer is that the BBC was still applying some kind of filtering to feedback from older kids. A surreptitious discrimination policy was identified in my December 2007 response to Ofcom's discussion paper on the future of children's TV. The BBC Executive has refused to comment on the policy despite repeated requests to come clean on the issue (see Appendix A - emails nos. 1 and 3). It is probable, but by no means certain, that filtering of all 14 and 15 year-olds' feedback ceased about four weeks after my submission was published on Ofcom's website. (See Appendix B)

The other, more probable reason for the large difference in feedback between 11 year-olds and 14 year-olds on SATs is that teens have recognised that CBBC doesn't want them and their opinions any more. After all, exactly two years earlier, on 12 May 2006 Richard Deverell went on Newsround to answer questions on why *Byker Grove* had been axed. At the time nearly 80% of (published) feedback was against the decision:-

http://newsarchive.awardspace.com/byker_grove_axing_decision.html

But despite strong objections from teenage viewers, the BBC went ahead with its decision to axe the programme. The second of the BBC's "Values" states:-

Audiences are at the heart of everything we do.

Teens had good reason to feel aggrieved. They had been ignored, and things went from bad to worse. Someone at the BBC had decided that children's TV was not for children over 12 years-old and the BBC started up a discriminatory policy to exclude them. Newsround concentrated on stories for primary school children and failed to interview secondary school children for their views. All feedback from children aged 14 or over was discarded without telling them that their views would be ignored.

3. PSB Purposes

In its first review of Public Service Broadcasting which commenced in November 2003, Ofcom sought to elicit a working definition of the purposes and components of PSB. This working definition was arrived at by late September 2004.

Originally Ofcom had suggested four enduring purposes of PSB from the citizen's perspective. The fourth purpose, "to support a tolerant and inclusive society, through the availability of programmes which reflect the lives of different people and communities within the UK, encourage a better understanding of different cultures and perspectives and, on occasion, bring the nation together for shared experiences" was, said Ofcom, felt by some to be "unduly ambitious in asking television to provide a means of social engineering." Taking comments into account, Ofcom's revision of the fourth purpose focussed on encouraging debate between different perspectives from different cultures, "in the hope that such debate may in turn support a more tolerant society."

The public purposes can be found here (see 2.12 and A.23):-

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/psb2/psb2/psb_phase2.pdf

But in short they could be summarised as:-

- to inform our understanding of the world
- to stimulate knowledge and learning
- to reflect UK cultural identity
- to represent diversity and alternative viewpoints

In addition Ofcom suggested that PSB programmes should have these distinctive characteristics:

high quality, original, innovative, challenging, engaging and widely available.

4. Deceiving the public

On 6 February 2008 the BBC announced that one of its iconic children's programmes, *Grange Hill*, would be axed. Anne Gilchrist, Controller of CBBC, told Newsround:

"It's been going now for 31 series, and I think it's time to say goodbye to it, just because we want to do other new things. And we feel that children do other things apart from go to school, and we wanted to explore areas in children's lives that happen outside the school arena."

And in a BBC press release she said:

"The lives of children have changed a great deal since *Grange Hill* began and we owe it to our audience to reflect this."

One kids' programme which did explore children's lives "outside the school arena" was, of course, *Byker Grove*. But that had been axed in May 2006 against the wishes of CBBC's audience. Newer CBBC programmes do not, in general, represent real children's lives. There are no secret agent kids such as those we see in *M.I. High*. BBC children's programmes, with a few notable exceptions, concentrate more on fantasy than on reality. Representation of LGBT people in children's programmes is less now than it was ten years ago.

Grange Hill was voted the best kids' TV programmes ever in an online poll of 5000 18-40 year olds.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/7304256.stm>

Newsround asked its viewers what they thought about *Grange Hill* ending?

http://newsarchive.awardspace.com/grange_hill_axing_decision.html

This time (published) feedback was somewhat less hostile to the programme being axed than was the case with *Byker Grove* in May 2006, quite possibly because by February 2008 less older children were watching CBBC. Nevertheless a clear majority of responses were against the axing decision.

However according to a message posted by Simon on a fansite, Anne Gilchrist had claimed that "the overwhelming feedback from the CBBC audience is that they are not sad to see Grange Hill go."

<http://www.ghblackboard.co.uk/community/viewtopic.php?f=4&t=274#p2959>

The above forum may not be working so a copy of the message can be found on the link below:

http://newsarchive.awardspace.com/anne_gilchrist_grange_hill_feedback.html

I emailed Anne Gilchrist on 18 February 2008 to ask about her statement:

Feedback on axing of Grange Hill

Dear Anne,

I heard that following the axing of Grange Hill recently, you made a claim that "the overwhelming feedback from the CBBC audience is that they are not sad to see Grange Hill go." Please could you let me have more details of the feedback survey and figures upon which you based the statement, as it appears to be contradicted by feedback to CBBC Newsround.

Kind regards,

I received the following reply from Ms Gilchrist:-

Dear David

Thank you very much for your interest in Grange Hill. Unfortunately I am not willing to continue the discussion, I have made my decision and I am pleased that the CBBC audience supports it.

Best wishes

Assuming that (published) Newsround feedback was typical of all the feedback on the axing received by CBBC, Ms Gilchrist's claim appeared doubtful. I therefore carried out statistical analysis on the (published) Newsround data and compared this with a hypothesis that the actual combined feedback received by CBBC had been 60%-40% in favour of Ms Gilchrist's decision (on the basis that anything less than 60-40 could not reasonably be characterised as "overwhelming")

The tests indicated that it was extremely unlikely that Ms Gilchrist was correct in her claim. This was put to the BBC Head of Children's (see Appendix A – emails 4a to 4f), and subsequently to the Director-General (see Appendix A – email 4), who has not responded.

It seems therefore that the BBC has not adhered to one of the recommendations in Will Wyatt's report, which was published on 5 October 2007. Will Wyatt says:

When anyone in the BBC becomes aware that the corporation has put something misleading or untrue into the public domain a correction must be issued at the earliest opportunity. It must be understood that the BBC's honesty with the public has to be the first concern.

Responding, Mark Thompson said: "I would like to thank Will Wyatt for a thorough investigation and report. I accept his findings and recommendations in full."

Despite the BBC Trust having been fully aware of this deception incident, as well as suspicions of other deceptions, their report *Editorial Controls and Compliance*, published on 9 May 2008 turned a blind eye. Their report stated: “we are satisfied that the public can be justified in maintaining its confidence in its BBC.”

5. Trust review of children’s services

I did contact Geoff Goodwin, Head of BBC Switch in June 2008. In response to my question about audience figures, Mr Goodwin said that BBC Switch (BBC2 Saturday afternoons) averages figures between 100,000 and 300,000. I asked if there were plans for a separate digital channel and was told that as far as he was aware there were no such plans, but that it might be broadcast on BBC Three. This, though, was a question only the BBC Executive could answer formally.

The Trust is now conducting a review of kids’ services, but it has been arranged in two parts, Children’s services and Young people’s services:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/framework/bbc_service_licences/2008_reviews.html

The second review, commencing in the autumn of 2008, will cover provision for young people on BBC Three, Radio 1, 1Xtra and offerings branded *BBC Switch*. I asked a Trust spokesperson why the review was split in two. On 16th May 2008 I asked “By arranging the children’s services consultation in two discreet age-separated parts, a proper and fundamental review can’t take place as the Trust unit must surely appreciate. I would be grateful if you could let me know why the Trust decided to take this course of action, when the decision was made, and by whom?” The Trust’s reply on 30th May referred to the amended CBBC service licence:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/framework/bbc_service_licences/tv.html#part-5

I was informed that “The Trust approves a service licence for each of the BBC’s services; this sets out how a service should help the BBC deliver the Public Purposes, it defines the target audience and provides any conditions for a service (usually minimum hours for different types of output).” Also: “The Trust will analyse the consultation responses we receive alongside its other audience research. If it concludes that changes should be made to the BBC’s services for young people it will change the relevant Service Licences to reflect this. ...”

In her literature review used in Ofcom’s October 2007 discussion paper on children’s television, Professor Messenger Davies refers to some research for one of her earlier publications. Professor Messenger Davies had asked kids aged 6-12 to play the role of children’s TV programme controllers and choose what programmes other kids should watch. They came up with lists such as the following: Top of the Pops, Rugrats, Home and Away, Blue Peter, Slot Meithrin, EastEnders, Live and Kicking and Ren and Stimpy. This list, from a group of Welsh 12-year-olds, represents both range of genre and plurality of provenance.

Sara Bragg and David Buckingham said in an October 2002 Broadcasting Standards Commission review of research:- “.. it is increasingly recognised that the diversity of young people’s responses to television – and indeed their understanding and experience of sexual matters - cannot be neatly encapsulated within a developmental model based purely on chronological age.”

In a recent message to me (9th June 2008) Prof Messenger Davies wondered who is serving the needs of the younger teens (12-14 year olds), since Newsround is now focussing on 12s and under as a matter of policy. Furthermore, educationalist Professor David Hargreaves, the associate director of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and former head of the QCA has said that pigeonholing children by age is "an extremely crude measure". Recently he told me that age banding in broadcasting for young people is arbitrary, since maturity and age among the young are not strongly correlated, and are becoming yet more weakly related this century.

Age banding in books was in the news recently when a petition was initiated by celebrated author, Philip Pullman. It was the subject of a BBC Newsround report and feedback:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_7430000/newsid_7439200/7439226.stm

Nearly all kids' responses were against the idea, which was put forward a while ago by the Publishers Association, but is opposed by many children's writers including all five Children's Laureates to date. The Publishers Association had consulted 500 adults who buy books for gifts, but it had not asked for children's opinions or considered the downside to age banding.

6. Homegrown content

There are too few UK made programmes on children's television. One that is broadcast at present is the excellent *Tracy Beaker*. But however worthy this programme might be, it isn't acceptable for the BBC to screen it in a series of endless repeats as is happening on the digital CBBC channel.

The Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television (PACT) made a short spoof film clip: *Badass Wombles of Central Park* to warn of a crisis facing UK children's television. Lack of homegrown children's programmes was also one of the issues raised in Ofcom's PSB consultation published on 10 April 2008.

The Womble clip asks: "Ever wonder why your kids speak a different language?" The answer, according to PACT, is that children's TV is dominated by imported shows - new UK programmes account for just 1% of all children's television broadcast in the UK. Great Uncle Bulgaria adds "... and I thought I was short-sighted. Tell those Wombles in government we need to start making British programmes for British kids again before it's too late." The film clip ends with a question - "what is a fanny pack anyway?" (it means a "bum bag" in British English)

Jana Bennett, BBC Director of Vision, spoke to Breakfast TV about her reaction to the PACT campaign. She suggested that the BBC may devote more resources to homegrown content, particularly in regard to CBeebies, but her precise intentions were unclear. See the transcript of her interview here:

http://newsarchive.awardspace.com/jana_bennett_april08.html

One of CBBC's 2008 programme offerings is the cartoon *Eliot Kid*. Not even the dubbing for *Eliot Kid* is done in this country; language, as with the PACT spoof film clip, is all American English. For instance, in one episode when their teacher asks Max to work with Mimi in a school class presentation about grasshoppers, Max calls Mimi a "slowpoke" (it means "slowcoach" in British English).

7. Conclusions

Whilst the BBC has dedicated digital TV channels for children up to the age of 12, it seems that there are no definite plans for a similar service aimed at secondary school viewers. The BBC was aware of the lack of services for this group at least two years ago, but instead of concentrating on the problem as a matter of urgency, the corporation has continued to put efforts into services for younger kids (ages 1-6 and 6-12).

In order for the new teen service, BBC Switch, to take off and become popular it would need its own digital channel, and to be broadcast every day of the week. Such a service would pick up younger viewers as well as those it was aimed at, just as has been the case in children's books, for example with seven year-olds reading and enjoying Harry Potter. But then everyone might wonder why the BBC didn't just leave children's television well alone; they might wonder why not leave it as it was a few years ago with several realistic and relevant programmes which appealed to children of all ages – and without the divisive split .

The BBC Trust, in conducting reviews separately for children and young people's services, seems intent on rubber-stamping BBC management's divisive split between younger kids and teens. The previous Governors had approved this approach. The sole rationale given for splitting off teens, after I requested an explanation from the senior BBC echelon was that "it seemed sensible and obvious to segment the offerings in this way" (Appendix A - email no. 6). However, as outlined in a previous section of this submission, age banding is increasingly recognised as outdated, and it is apparently resented by children themselves.

Paucity of services for teens was recognised as a significant problem by parents and kids as reported in Ofcom's October 2007 discussion paper on the future of children's television. An ironic consequence of the BBC's condescending attitude to children is that the news about the discussion paper failed to get a single mention on the BBC's flagship children's news programme, Newsround, or its website.

The controller of CBBC misrepresented the backing she had from CBBC audiences over her axing of *Grange Hill*, once a groundbreaking children's drama series and regarded as one of the best children's programmes. When challenged over her claim she point-blank refused to discuss the issue, yet despite all the BBC's fine words on transparency and honesty nothing has been done to correct the error or even acknowledge that a mistake was made.

The BBC Statements of Programme Policy states: "The BBC, as an open and transparent organisation which is trusted by the public it serves, seeks to engage its audiences in dialogue, to learn from them and to respond honestly to what they have to say." However the BBC has signally failed to explain why Newsround web feedback from 14 and 15 year-old teens was systematically and surreptitiously discarded, whether or not the discrimination has finished and who instigated the practice.

Far from strengthening UK cultural identity, CBBC has been guilty of importing transatlantic customs and language for many years. A notorious example is *Blue Peter's* promotion of 'Trick or treat,' which has assumed the status of a serious nuisance causing some police forces and local authorities to put out autumn alerts.

The lack of significant serious programming for children and teens, including realistic drama and magazine programmes, could potentially hold negative consequences for UK society. Such programming could help promote a cohesive culture and the BBC is urged most strenuously to reconsider its divisive Creative Future policy on children's services.

Appendix A

Partial list of email correspondence

(In some cases Ccs were sent to other persons with an interest in the topic. Only the substance of each email is shown – not the greetings or signing off etc. I have tried to keep to a similar layout such as underlining, italics and font colours)

email no. 1 - This email was sent from me to the Director-General, Mark Thompson, on 11 September 2007 –

I am writing to you not by way of a complaint, but rather to inform you as Editor-in-chief of two covert ways in which the BBC isn't complying with its own guidelines and policies.

On 18 July 2007 you said on Newsnight: "Deceiving the public is never the right thing to do. There's no excuse for doing it. And in the end, from now on - I thought this was clear before, but absolutely make it clear now - from now on, if it happens we will show people the door."

Firstly I want to draw your attention to a covert policy on CBBC webpages. In September 2006 I discovered that almost all feedback on Newsround's webpages from those aged 15 or above had vanished. By December 2006 the same was true of those aged 14 and above. I have included a link to a page with the statistical evidence:-

http://newsarchive.awardspace.com/newsround_age_survey.html

Prior to these dates a majority of kids writing in, whose posts were put online, were age 13 and over (around 55%), but now there are very few messages published from older kids.

You will note that nowhere is there any warning that messages from older children will be discarded, and of course a statement saying "If you are under the age of 16, you must obtain a parent or guardian's permission before sending us your comment" implies that such messages **are welcome**. "Thanks for your comment. We'll try and put up as many e-mails as possible" does not give any hint that older kids will be discriminated against and will be wasting their time getting in touch.

Secondly your diversity policy:

The CBBC *Your Life* message board is intended to enable kids to talk to each other about growing up problems and seek advice from an expert. Discussions include worries about relationships, puberty, periods and so forth. But for a long while, posts from kids about lgbt-related issues which use words like 'lesbian' or 'gay' have been filtered out from the board. Based on an official estimate of the lgb population, and all else being equal, for every one hundred posts about crushes the chance of zero posts about same sex attraction is very low (about 1 in 400). In fact, there is a slightly greater expectation of fourteen or more such messages in every hundred than none at all. Other CBBC message boards, including the *Bullying* board, seem to be similarly filtered.

Jana Bennett, BBC Director of Vision, said only two months ago: "We help children understand themselves and their relationships in all their rich complexity and in particular, understand their world – begin to fathom their navigation of relationships, their situation, through the experience of others whom they can relate to." This statement, part of Ms Bennett's invited keynote speech to Showcomotion, is belied by the fact that all permanent growing up advice for children has recently been removed from the CBBC website. Ms Bennett's concern about children hearing of lesbian relationships is a matter of record.

For a short time early this summer there were hopeful signs that the CBBC message boards were starting to become inclusive. But it now appears likely that lgbt-related posts are again being filtered out. The result is a lack of advice for children who may already be feeling isolated.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child makes clear that children's rights must be protected against all forms of discrimination. 'Every Child Matters' considered the welfare of children, and its five main outcomes for children were incorporated into the Children Act 2004. And, importantly, the BBC says it is "committed to reflecting the diversity of the UK audience in its workforce, as well as in its output on TV, on radio and online."

email no. 2 - This email was sent to me by Vis Karunaratne, Divisional Advisor for Future Media and Technology complaints, BBC Information on 11 October 2007. It is in response to email no.1 –

Thank you for your email to Mark Thompson. As I am sure you will appreciate, the Director-General receives more correspondence than he can deal with personally, so once letters have been read they are forwarded by his office to BBC Information. This department has a wealth of knowledge about BBC programmes and policies and is experienced in the workings of the Corporation. The Director-General has therefore authorised us to reply on his behalf.

I raised your concerns with the CBBC Website Team and their reply is below:

"Thank you for your email regarding the message boards and comment forms at CBBC. As you may be aware, the CBBC channel (including CBBC on BBC One) and all its programmes are now aimed at children aged from 6 to 12, full details can be seen here

< <http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/keyfacts/stories/cbbc.shtml> >. This explains why Newsround does not normally publish comments from those aged 13 or above. Your concerns about how this is communicated to web users has been passed to the Newsround editorial team.

On CBBC message boards, comments from children are not filtered out for the reason that they have used words such as 'lesbian' or 'gay'. The general guidelines for the CBBC message boards are that posts about a user's sexuality should not be published, but that if the poster appears to be in distress, or unhappy, a message is posted from CBBC pointing the user in the direction of avenues of help. However, posters ARE allowed to discuss issues such as civil partnerships, or lesbian/gay adoption, and would be allowed, for example, to talk about a parent or older sibling being gay.

Whilst children as old as 15 are permitted to use our message boards, we must ensure all content which is posted is suitable for our target audience of 7 to 12 year olds. This means that everything we publish and any sites we link to must be appropriate for that young audience. We are currently working with our colleagues who are launching the BBC Switch project which is aimed at teenagers.

We hope to find a solution for teenagers to allow them to talk about issues that are inappropriate for a younger audience."

Thank you for your feedback.

email no. 3 - This email was sent by me to the Director-General on 18 February 2008. After some reminders, a reply was received from John Farmer (see email no. 6). Neither Mr Farmer, nor the Director-General or anyone else at the BBC has responded to the questions about discrimination.

You probably remember that I emailed you on 11 September 2007 with subject *Discriminatory message filtering at CBBC*.

Following an intervention by the BBC Trust Unit, the reply sent on your behalf on 11 October 2007 supported the status quo. However it seems that the Trust escalated the matter to "Stage 2" and I am pleased to note that, since 11 January 2008, the Newsround website has again allowed older children to have their say.

As with some more high-profile phone-ins last year, a number of children will have been misled into wasting their time and possibly money contacting the BBC. Although the covert age discrimination has now apparently ceased, this deliberate sidelining of older children contravened the exemplary ethical standards we are entitled to expect. I would therefore appreciate an explanation as to why this practice was implemented, and by whom, and why it was allowed to remain in place for well over a year. In addition I think it would be right and proper for the BBC to apologise to the people affected.

Perhaps you can also help on some closely related issues.

I would like to know the rationale, including details of audience research, upon which the main BBC children's television channels have become much more narrowly age focussed. One of the BBC Purpose Remits is to represent the UK's nations, regions and communities. Teens now have almost no representation, a clear failure to conform with the Purpose Remit.

Next I am interested to find out why the BBC unaccountably removed help and advice to young people about growing up issues. I am referring to the CBBC *Your Life - No Problem* webpages, which dealt with exactly the kind of topics which Jana Bennett talked about to *Showcomotion* last year in her keynote speech.

Finally I regret to say that BBC discrimination against LGBT kids has not ceased. LGBT kids still appear unable to express themselves and their concerns on CBBC message boards, and Newsround is still not covering relevant LGBT news or issues - once again a failure to observe modern standards of diversity and inclusiveness, as well as a failure to meet the Purpose Remit.

Many thanks, and I look forward to your early response to these important issues.

email no. 4 - This email {Subject: Anne Gilchrist, Controller of CBBC (Fwd: Feedback on axing of Grange Hill)} was sent by me to the Director-General on 4 March 2008. This email together with attached correspondence (4a to 4h) has never been responded to, or even acknowledged by the Director-General or his staff.

While waiting for a reply to the questions in my email of 18 February 2008, and in view of your firm and unequivocal statements on 18 July 2007 about the unacceptability of BBC staff deceiving the public (e.g. links below), I hope you will carefully review the attached correspondence regarding Anne Gilchrist.

I look forward to hearing back from you on the above, as well as on the issues already raised.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaselector/check/player/nol/newsid_6900000/newsid_6905200?redirect=6905245.stm&news=1&bbrwm=1&nbram=1&nbwm=1&asb=1

http://newsarchive.awardspace.com/mark_thompson_18_july_2007.html

---Attached emails – all emails 4(a) to 4(h) were forwarded to the Director-General with Email no. 4 as evidence of deception by Anne Gilchrist. They are shown below in reverse chronological order ---

email no. 4(a) – Me to Richard Deverell (26 Feb 2008)
Subject: Re: Feedback on axing of Grange Hill

I am grateful for your email reply yesterday afternoon.

In my earlier email I referred to the BBC Purpose Remits which were published recently, not to CBBC Service Remits - a different matter. For your own information I have already written to the DG and to the BBC Trust about the Purpose Remits and inclusiveness issues.

I should point out that I only carried out a detailed study of Newsround's feedback over the *Grange Hill* decision following Anne Gilchrist's rather curt email. I have drawn your attention to the ethical considerations. Ms Gilchrist was far from transparent in how she dealt with my question, but perhaps your department would now care to review the situation and issue an apology if you feel it appropriate.

On the positive side I do appreciate that Anne Gilchrist has commissioned some very nice programmes, including for example *Summerhill* and *Bear Behaving Badly*. Nevertheless I feel Anne's conduct here fell short of the standard which CBBC's audience is entitled to expect.

email no.4(b) – Richard Deverell to me (25 Feb 2008)

At the risk of repetition, I believe Anne has, as always, been transparent. She makes about 80 commissioning decisions each year and whilst audience feedback is an important factor to consider it is not the only factor. We do not have any substantial evidence that there has been a widespread backlash to the decision to end Grange Hill.

You and I have exchanged many emails over the past year about the Service Remits for CBBC. These are reviewed and endorsed (or not) by the Trustees. Might I suggest that you raise your concerns with them? It was their predecessors, the Governors, who endorsed the focus on 6-12 year olds for CBBC three years ago.

email no.4(c) –me to Richard Deverell (25 Feb 2008)

Thank you for your reply this morning.

My underlying concern is whether the BBC is fulfilling its Purpose Remits, and in particular the one regarding the representation of nations, regions and communities. I think you are already aware of my concerns about inclusiveness issues, and hence the question arises as to why the BBC now gives so little representation to teens.

So this comes back to whether Anne Gilchrist has behaved transparently with her *Grange Hill* assertion, and based on the feedback to Newsround it seems that she has not been accurate. Interestingly you said there wasn't a great deal of other feedback, and I would have thought that the feedback to Newsround would be representative of the CBBC audience. Statistically this constitutes extremely strong evidence of the overall CBBC audience reaction.

That is why I requested further details of responses which could prove otherwise. On the face of it there is still reason to doubt Ms Gilchrist's statements, and I therefore hope you will agree to provide details, perhaps categorising individual feedback in a similar way to that which I categorised Newsround's feedback. You'll notice that in my tally I gave the BBC decision the benefit of the doubt where an individual's response was in any way ambiguous.

email no. 4(d) – Richard Deverell to me (25 Feb 2008)

My apologies - for some reason I did not receive or see your email of February 19th.

I really don't believe there has been a serious breach of ethical standards. We have had surprisingly little feedback from audiences regarding the ending of Grange Hill. Some of this has come from the NewsRound discussion (to which you refer) but we have also had comments into CBBC Presentation and letters from the public (both adults and children). Drawing upon all of those sources I am confident that Anne's comments below are factually accurate.

I'm afraid we are not going to reinstate Grange Hill. What is your underlying concern here?

email no. 4(e) – Me to Richard Deverell (25 February 2008)

I am sorry not to have yet heard back from you in reply to my email last Tuesday 19 Feb 2008. As I explained, Ms Gilchrist's claim of audience support for the axing of Grange Hill does not appear to be correct - potentially a very serious breach of ethical standards.

If there is indeed CBBC audience feedback evidence to justify Ms Gilchrist's statements then I would be obliged to receive details. I appreciate that you have always been prompt in replying to emails.

email no. 4(f) – Me to Richard Deverell (19 February 2008)

Yesterday I contacted Anne Gilchrist concerning an email she wrote in reply to Simon from the Grange Hill fan website. In her reply to Simon, Ms Gilchrist stated: "the overwhelming feedback from the CBBC audience is that they are not sad to see Grange Hill go." I saw the email exchanges posted on the Grange Hill site forums and I was surprised because Newsround's feedback indicates that the majority were against the change. see here:

http://newsarchive.awardspace.com/grange_hill_axing_decision.html

Unfortunately Anne was not prepared to be more forthcoming on where her feedback came from (see forwarded message), although she did state that she was pleased that the CBBC audience supported her decision.

I have now examined the statistics involved, and even assuming that Anne's definition of "overwhelming" is a minimum of 60%-40%, with a sample size of 52 the chances are extremely unlikely that her statement was accurate, based on the Newsround sample.

I would appreciate your comments on feedback to CBBC after Grange Hill was axed.

email no. 4(g) – Anne Gilchrist to me (18 February 2008)

Thank you very much for your interest in Grange Hill. Unfortunately I am not willing to continue the discussion, I have made my decision and I am pleased that the CBBC audience supports it.

email no. 4(h) – me to Anne Gilchrist (18 February 2008)

I heard that following the axing of Grange Hill recently, you made a claim that "the overwhelming feedback from the CBBC audience is that they are not sad to see Grange Hill go."

Please could you let me have more details of the feedback survey and figures upon which you based the statement, as it appears to be contradicted by feedback to CBBC Newsround.

email no. 5 - This email was sent from me to the Director-General, Mark Thompson, on 17 March 2008. It is interesting to note the promise of inclusiveness added to last year's Statements of Programme Policy has been omitted from the Statements of Programme Policy 2008/2009. The BBC has not acknowledged or responded to this email.

Trust in a given institution may be based on a great tradition and great inherited values, but it depends on what you do today. It has to be earned and earned again. Those words came from a lecture you gave in January - *The Trouble with Trust: Building Confidence in Institutions*.

The BBC claims it's an open and transparent organisation which is trusted by the public, and says that it seeks to engage its audiences in dialogue, to learn from them and to respond honestly to what they have to say.

Last year you took a number of measures intended to restore faith in the BBC, and spent a lot of licence payers' money into the bargain. You said that any colleagues who deceive the public would be shown the door, but as yet you have not even acknowledged my email about Anne Gilchrist's deceitful behaviour.

The problem, however, goes much deeper than falsehoods from a very senior member of your staff. Truth is that the problem of honesty exists at an institutional level as well -- the BBC Purpose Remits, the Diversity policy and the promise of inclusiveness which was added to the 2007/2008 Statements of Programme Policy. Despite all of these, the BBC continues to slight teenagers and discriminate against LGBT kids.

Why should the BBC be trusted? How can any 21st century British institution which flouts its own policies profess to be honest and trustworthy.

You are already aware of these concerns, and I therefore look forward to hearing back from you soon on how you are to tackle these problems.

Unfortunately, Mark, I feel there is scant reason to trust the BBC at present.

email no. 6 - This email was sent by John Farmer to me on 1 April 2008. It was intended as a response to my email to the Director-General on 18 February 2008 (email no. 3).

I am writing in reference to your email to the Director Generals Office and in particular your question regarding the BBC rationale regarding children's programming where you asked:

"I would like to know the rationale, including details of audience research, upon which the main BBC children's television channels have become much more narrowly age focussed. One of the BBC Purpose Remits is to represent the UK's nations, regions and communities. Teens now have almost no representation, a clear failure to conform with the Purpose Remit."

Firstly let me apologise as it seems that you have not received my earlier emails on this matter.

The BBC currently has CBBC, a channel with dedicated programming and online content for 6-12 year olds and BBC Switch serving 12-16 year olds. We also have CBeebies, which dedicated to viewers under 6.

Creative Futures spent a year researching the breakdown in age groups and it seemed sensible and obvious to segment the offerings in this way and in fact these age segmentations are very common across different industries and educational providers.

The BBC is dedicated to providing a more wide and varied output for 12-16 year olds, including television, radio and online content. The launch of BBC switch has proven a great success and will long continue to provide programming for this target age range.

I hope this has gone someway to answering your queries.

email no. 6(a) - This email reply to John Farmer was sent the same day. Despite several reminders there was no response from Mr Farmer, until some six weeks later an email was received from him via BBC Information (email no.7)

Thank you for email today about one of the questions I put to the Director-General.

I am having difficulty tracing the earlier emails to which you refer. Please could you provide the exact dates and times when these were sent, and their subject headers.

Regarding the substance of your message, my question was about audience research upon which the decision to more narrowly focus the target age range was based. In fact the decision appears to be negated by the extensive audience research in Ofcom's discussion document on the future of children's television, published on 3 October 2007. You haven't provided any details of the BBC's audience research and I would still appreciate seeing the data.

Also you mentioned that BBC Switch has proven a great success, but in TV audience terms how does it compare with CBBC?

email no. 7 - This email was sent by John Farmer to me on 16 May 2008. It followed several reminders to reply, and was sent approximately four hours after I made it pretty clear to the BBC Trust (with a Cc to Mr Farmer) that I didn't believe that those "earlier emails" to which Mr Farmer referred had really existed.

Firstly let me apologise for the delay in responding. My previous emails unfortunately were sent to an incorrect email address.

With regard to your questions about the research that we did, I'm afraid I don't have any more information than was in my previous email. However, I'm pleased to tell you that the head of BBC Switch, Geoffrey Goodwin, is happy to discuss the remit of BBC Switch with you and he can also provide further detail about the research that was carried out by Creative Futures. Geoffrey will be on leave until 9th June however, you can contact him via the BBC switchboard on 0208 743 8000.

If you wish to make any further enquiries or complaints, could you please do so via the complaints website <http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/> as this is the only way we can make sure your correspondence is logged correctly and answered within a timely fashion. I regret that I'm unable to guarantee a response to anything sent to my personal email address.

I'm sorry I couldn't be of further assistance on this matter but I trust that Geoffrey will be able to provide you with the information that you require.

email no. 8 - This email was sent by me to the BBC Trust on 7 May 2008:-

Thank you again for your email dated 10th April 2008.

BBC management still seem unwilling to address the issues I've raised about the Corporation. The situation regarding Mr Farmer and the Director-General was explained in my emails to you on 11th and 22nd April 2008, and I hope that Mrs Pritchard and Sir Michael Lyons are being kept in the picture.

I contacted the BBC Trust on 6 March last year and received a reply from Rebecca Asher dated 16 March 2007 (Your ref: 13945927). Rebecca's email cited the BBC's diversity strategy adopted in 2005 and quoted its aim "to be inclusive of the differences that make up the reality of modern Britain, including gender, age, ethnicity and cultural diversity, people with disabilities, different faiths and social backgrounds, and different sexual orientations." I was aware that some sections of the BBC were not keeping to these guidelines. On 25 March 2007 I emailed Diane Coyle detailing two examples of discriminatory practice on a CBBC message board.

On 23 April 2007 Rebecca Asher replied on behalf of Ms Coyle (Your ref: 14041020). In the reply I was told that it is "appropriate that the BBC's management be given an opportunity to respond to your complaint." Rebecca also asked BBC Information to look into correspondence and respond to me. I replied on 24 April 2007 to say that I had been aware of BBC management's diversity strategy. My email made clear that I would wait a short while longer to see if the BBC moved towards being a diverse-friendly and inclusive organisation, but ended by saying that I had little confidence in BBC Information and the related procedures dealing fairly with matters of inclusiveness. My email was acknowledged on 3 May 2007 and copied to Mehmda Pritchard as "the appropriate Trustee to take on board these points."

For a short period of approximately six weeks early last summer the BBC relaxed their previous discriminatory attitude to LGBT issues and people on CBBC message boards. For example messages with words like 'gay' and 'lesbian' were allowed on the *Your Life* message board, and two were answered by CBBC's agony uncle:-

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/mbcbbc/F2697950?thread=4180595>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/mbcbbc/F2697950?thread=4281232>

However by the autumn kids were, once again, denied permission to self-identify as LGBT on CBBC message boards or to support others in that situation. This is not only in breach of BBC guidelines, it is also in breach of young people's human rights which are protected by the Human Rights Act 1998; it is contrary to the "Five Outcomes for Children" and finally it is simply unfair.

On 11 September 2007 I emailed the Director-General to advise him, as the BBC Editor-in-chief, that BBC guidelines were not being adhered to. Firstly I explained that there was a covert discrimination policy against 14 and 15 year-olds on Newsround's website, and secondly I went into the discrimination against LGBT children on CBBC message boards. I queried why, in the light of Jana Bennett's Showcomotion keynote speech on 5 July 2007, CBBC had by then removed advice about growing up from their website. My email included a reference to 'Every Child Matters' which formed the basis of the Children Act 2004, and ended with a reminder that the BBC says it is "committed to reflecting the diversity of the UK audience in its workforce, as well as in its output on TV, on radio and online."

The BBC had already been criticised nationally for unfairness on children's programmes like *Blue Peter*, but the Director-General did not attempt to see that the cases of unfairness to which I had drawn his attention on 11 September 2007, were put right. In fact he did nothing. An email from myself to Sir Michael Lyons with a Cc to the Trust office on 9 October 2007 elicited a response from BBC Information on behalf of the Director-General later that day.

On 11 October 2007 BBC Information responded more fully, although there were errors in the reply which I pointed out in an email to Mehmda Mian Pritchard on the morning of 15 October 2007 with Ccs to Mark Thompson and Sir Michael Lyons. The Newsround website policy of age discrimination was abandoned apparently on 11 January 2008, though the BBC has neither admitted it was at fault nor apologised for the policy.

Regarding the question of honesty, even after time and money expended on the Safeguarding Trust course, BBC staff problems remained. An inquiry, commissioned by Mark Thompson and conducted by Will Wyatt, which was published on 5 October 2007, included the following recommendation:

When anyone in the BBC becomes aware that the corporation has put something misleading or untrue into the public domain a correction must be issued at the earliest opportunity. It must be understood that the BBC's honesty with the public has to be the first concern.

Responding, Mark Thompson said: *"I would like to thank Will Wyatt for a thorough investigation and report. I accept his findings and recommendations in full."* Nevertheless, when Anne Gilchrist made false claims about audience feedback over the axing of *Grange Hill*, the BBC failed to correct her statements. Neither, as far as I'm aware, has the Director-General censured Ms Gilchrist for her falsehood.

Bringing things up to date, Mark Thompson recently welcomed hearing from licence payers' in a debate about Public Service Broadcasting in the lead-up to the BBC's own response to Ofcom's review. He said on 10 April 2008 that he wanted *"to focus on what our audiences want from us in the future."*

On 1 April 2008 John Farmer wrote in response to one of my questions to the Director-General. But despite two reminders he has not replied to my follow-up questions, copies of which have been sent to the Trust. Presumably he is unable to sustain BBC management's assertion regarding the "great success" of BBC Switch. I doubt BBC Switch is value for licence payers' money, since it involves a duplication of resources and is broadcast on television in an unpopular time slot. I'm sure the Trust is aware that there were many comments about the lack of programming for teens in Annex 10 of the first phase of Ofcom's second review of public service broadcasting.

As you can see I have allowed the BBC a considerable period in which to put things right, and although some of the discrimination against 14 and 15 year-olds has been remedied, discrimination against LGBT kids has not. It survives because the BBC is flouting its own diversity strategy.

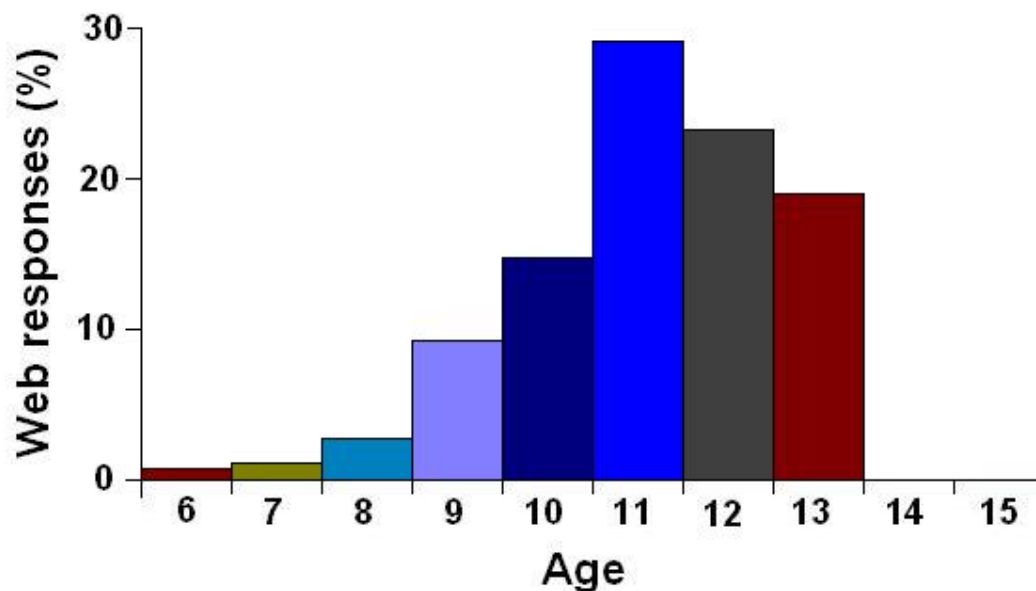
I would like to know what action plan will now be adopted to end discrimination and restore trust in the BBC.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Two days later, on 9 May 2008, the BBC Trust published 'Editorial Controls and Compliance,' The Trust concluded (excerpt): **"At the heart of the BBC's culture sits the basic commitment to honesty, integrity and straight dealing. It is those values that across eight decades have won the trust and support of the public. Since the first editorial failing came to light in 2007, the BBC has acted swiftly and not shied away from providing full information about its mistakes and errors. It also gave a firm commitment to put its house in order. The Trust believes there is real evidence of this commitment being met. ..."**

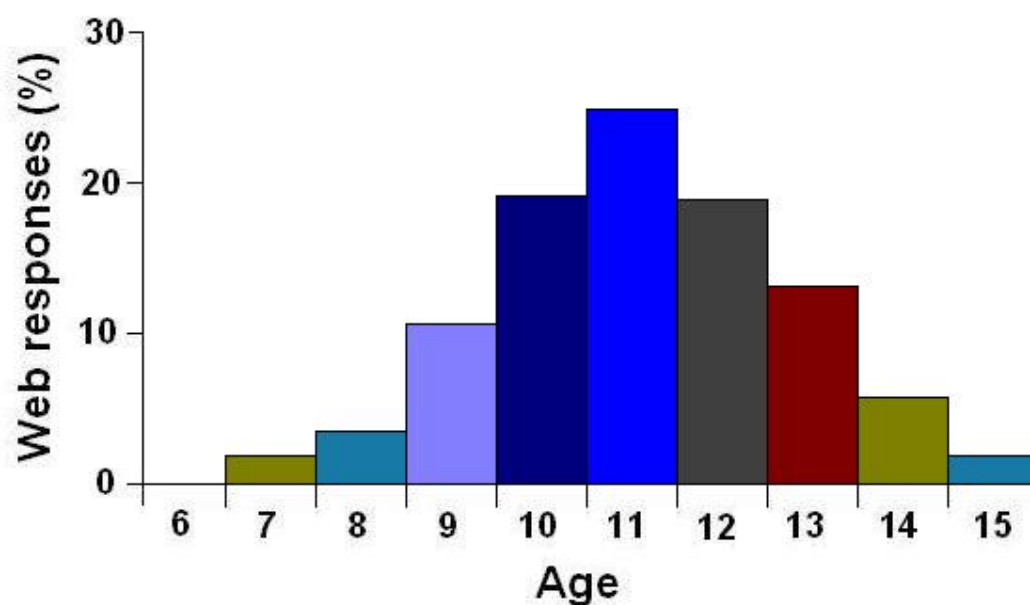
Appendix B
Age distribution of Newsround's (published) feedback responses

June-July 2007



For June-July 2007 data sources and methodology see -
http://newsarchive.awardspace.com/newsround_age_survey.html

13 January – 25 January 2008



For Jan 13-25 data sources and methodology see -
http://newsarchive.awardspace.com/newsround_age_survey_2008.html