



## **The BBC's audiences**

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Charter Review  
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# The BBC's audiences

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# Overview

Audiences are central to everything the BBC does. Indeed the reason the BBC exists is to serve the whole audience, in all its diversity, with programmes and services which enrich their lives. To do so the BBC makes great efforts to understand them, their interests, tastes and concerns.

The BBC uses a variety of methods to keep in touch with audience opinions and to encourage them to build communities of interests and develop closer relationships with their favourite programmes.

This continual dialogue enables the BBC to understand better what audiences want from its services and to make changes to improve the way it serves audiences. This understanding is vital to the development of new services and programme ideas. But it is also essential to ensure that the BBC keeps abreast of changes in society and broadcasting.

The BBC has always been engaged in audience understanding - its research team was established in 1936 - and it continues to be essential to ensure that the corporation remains relevant. It also means that the audiences themselves are the inspiration for many programmes and services, and inform new approaches to programming genres. Increasingly, audience insight is being fed into each stage of the creative process, ensuring that the BBC develops programmes and services that more closely meet audience expectations.

As well as understanding its audiences, the BBC must have the means to serve all audiences. The BBC has a coherent channel portfolio for the digital era, with five different types of service in order to do this.

Writing in this year's annual report the Chairman of the BBC, Michael Grade, emphasised that for a national broadcaster funded by the licence fee, the relationship with its audiences is the foundation on which the BBC is built. "The truth is that the BBC is not inevitable. It exists because it earns its place in the affections of our audience by enriching lives through information, education and entertainment. The BBC has constantly to renew and refresh the bonds that link us to those audiences. We have to listen, learn and respond - and then go back and do it again".

We are living through advances in technology as momentous as the invention of radio and television. When the BBC's Charter was last renewed the personal use of mobile telephones was hardly mentioned. Today 88% of the UK's population have them and the newest models can carry live television programmes.

This digital revolution is now entering a second phase which will be characterised by faster fixed and mobile digital services bringing audiences easy access to a vast range of programmes, services and content on demand. Interactivity, effortless communication and sophisticated content creation will become ubiquitous in 'digitally-enabled' homes. If the full potential of this second phase is realised it could transform the lives of everyone in the UK.

This paper, the aim of which was agreed in advance with DCMS, sets out the way the BBC listens, learns and responds at a national, regional and local level across its radio, television and online services at this time of great change.

Chapter 1 looks at how the BBC aims to understand and identify its audiences. Chapter 2 covers how it aims to serve communities. Chapter 3 reflects on how the BBC's television, radio and online services meet the expectations of different audiences in the digital age. A separate BBC submission specifically looks at nations and regions in more depth.

# Chapter 1 Understanding audiences

The BBC is owned by everyone so its overarching objective is to reach all audiences and ensure that its services are relevant and useful to everyone. 93% of the UK's households use the BBC's radio and television services every week so it is vital to the creative health and cultural relevance of the organisation that we constantly understand their needs and expectations.

The BBC listens to its audiences in four principal ways:

- Audience research and polling
- Consultative and advisory bodies
- Public consultation
- Audience feedback

## 1.1 Audience research and polling

A range of audience research tools enables the BBC to:

- understand the audience environment in which the BBC operates to enable it to remain relevant.
- inform overall strategic thinking (for example identifying barriers to acquiring digital television or changing attitudes towards broadcasting, personal choice or taste and decency).
- develop plans for new services or changes to existing services, and to inform new approaches to programming genres. Increasingly, audience insight is being fed into each stage of the creative process, ensuring that the BBC develops programmes and services that more closely meet audience expectations.
- track opinion over time, identify emerging trends and indicate where the BBC may need to change its approach. Continuous tracking helps to identify new opportunities and threats, lifestyle trends or changes in the 'mood' of the nation. It helps the BBC understand the fundamental nature of the relationship that audiences have with the BBC and with its different programme and service brands.
- understand how to reach, and better provide for, people who tend not to use the BBC.
- stimulate creative thinking around audiences' lives, preferences and needs.

The BBC makes ever increasing efforts to understand the changing lives, needs and expectations of its audiences. Undertaking research and gathering information provides insight that stimulates the creative process. Without it, commissioners and

programme makers could not do their jobs. However, the BBC does this in a subtle and nuanced, rather than instrumental, manner – audience research cannot be the only driver of output. The nature of innovation means that across the range of its programmes, the BBC should surprise the audience, as well as meet expressed needs.

The BBC's extensive research into understanding audience expectations encompasses:

- the Daily Life survey
- audience ratings
- tracking studies
- ad hoc quantitative and qualitative research
- audience planning

### **Daily Life**

In the 1930's the BBC launched a unique study, the Daily Life Survey. The survey is carried out every five to ten years. It has evolved with both the changing needs of the BBC and technological advances in communications to ensure that the BBC understands where people live, who they are with, what they are doing, whether they are available to watch television, listen to the radio or go online, and what mood they are in.

The award-winning 2003 study used cutting-edge technology to gather information about nearly one million half-hour time slots from almost 20,000 different days involving six thousand different people, from children to the elderly.

### **Audience ratings**

The BBC plays a leading role in establishing, developing and funding industry-wide audience research. It jointly founded BARB and RAJAR which manage measurement panels for television and radio respectively, and continues to be a major shareholder in these bodies. Data from these panels enables the BBC to analyse viewing and listening to programmes, and to gauge levels of reach and share for specific channels or networks. Nielsen Netratings panel data provides regular website usage statistics.

However, the BBC is not just concerned with reach and share, but also quality, impact and distinctiveness. The BBC commissions a continuous survey of programme appreciation. Quest is a weekly survey of 4000 panellists representing audiences across the UK, and provides information on an audience appreciation index (or AI) of programmes. The survey can be tailored to ask questions about specific programmes and services and how much the public enjoyed a particular programme. Quest specifically surveys the attitudes of young people toward BBC programmes and services.

These different panels allow the BBC to identify trends in television, radio and internet consumption.

## **Tracking studies**

The Pan-BBC Tracking Study (PBTS) is a nationally representative quantitative study, with a sample of adults aged 15+. 800 in-home, face to face interviews are conducted per month with a separate representative sample of people each month. Topics covered include technology in the home, BBC approval and brand values, publicity and marketing, digital television and internet usage and attitudes. The PBTS helps the BBC to establish the key drivers of BBC approval; to identify key issues for BBC strategy at both a service level and for the business as a whole; to understand how successfully the BBC is communicating its services and values to the public; to gauge attitudes relating to take-up of digital television, including key barriers to take-up.

## **Ad-hoc research**

The BBC undertakes research at all stages of programme and service development, from the proposition through to the review of performance, ensuring that programmes and services are informed and inspired by an in-depth understanding of audience expectations.

Obtaining audience insights necessitates a number of different research techniques, from qualitative group interviews to innovative 'real time response' techniques (showing how audiences engage with a range of things from television news bulletins to local radio playlists). In addition the BBC increasingly employs observational and ethnographic research techniques to identify (rather than simply ask about) audience needs, in areas ranging from Saturday nights to CBeebies and online.

A wide range of ad-hoc qualitative and quantitative research is commissioned, covering subjects as diverse as the re-launch of *Top of the Pops*; an in-depth understanding of ethnic minority audiences; changing attitudes towards costume dramas; development of new digital radio networks; and the BBC's on-demand content trial in Hull.

## **Audience planning**

A dedicated team of 'audience planners' uses our understanding of audiences to inform strategies for the development of new and existing programmes, to help programme makers translate those strategies into programme ideas and to work with channel controllers to solve specific scheduling issues. In addition, this team helps ensure that the wider social and cultural context and emergent trends are fed into the programme development process. A recent example is the *If...* strand, where an audience planner worked with the programme early in the development process. Current projects include the search for a replacement for *The Simpsons* on BBC Two and the development of *The Culture Show*.

## **Case Study: Ethnicity**

As the UK evolves into an increasingly economically, socially, demographically and culturally diverse country, the BBC is responding. The Ethnic Minority project was started in autumn 2002 to focus on the specific aspect of ethnicity. We commissioned one of the biggest ever research projects by a broadcaster into the attitudes and consumption habits of ethnic minority audiences in the UK.

That research provided a new understanding that younger (ie 16 to 34 year old) ethnic minority audiences were more optimistic, ambitious and entrepreneurial than previously understood. The project also revealed a confidence within the BBC to look at issues around race that were not solely framed around discrimination.

The research led directly to new programme ideas and changes in on-screen representation. BBC Two commissioned *Big Dreams*, a major season on Asian business success, and *When Black became Beautiful* which looked at how black women are now increasingly evident in the worlds of fashion, music and beauty. On BBC One, *Holby City*, *EastEnders* and *Casualty* all increased ethnic minority portrayal as doctors, surgeons, and in the guest storylines. The channel now uses more black and Asian experts in mainstream documentaries for example as therapists, consultants, business experts and psychologists.

As a result black and Asian audiences have noticed the difference at the BBC. Approval levels are up - 48% of black people and 53% of Asians believe the BBC was getting 'better at representing ethnic minorities', compared with 33% of white people. Only Sky beats the BBC for approval levels amongst these groups.

## **1.2 Consultative and advisory bodies**

The BBC is supported by a range of consultative and advisory committees around the UK:

- Broadcasting Councils in each of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, whose Chairs are the National Governors for each nation and sit on the BBC's Board of Governors. The Councils have a particular responsibility to advise the Board on the needs and interests of audiences in their nations, and the contributions which programme makers in the nations can make to the BBC as a whole. The Board of Governors is required formally to consult the Councils on proposals of particular relevance to their nations.
- There are Forty-eight Regional and Local Advisory Councils across England made up of listeners and viewers who volunteer their time to give regular feedback on BBC services. They provide advice via the English National Forum, which is chaired by the BBC Governor for the English Regions, on BBC programmes and services in their regions. The BBC provides the bodies with

information about its services and proposals and rationales for changing them, to stimulate discussion.

Individual Councils are used to consider proposals of particular relevance to them. For example BBC2W was developed in response to proposals by the Broadcasting Council for Wales and, in Northern Ireland, a new business programme was developed after the Broadcasting Council identified weaknesses in the output.

Over the past four years the Governors have held detailed public meetings and seminars on a number of aspects of the BBC's services and relevant audiences ranging from Radio Five Live, cultural diversity, serving 15-24 year olds, taste and decency, online and arts.

### **Case Study: Arts programming**

Governors' concerns about the diminution of arts broadcasting on BBC television resulted in a new strategy being developed. The Governor's review of the new arts programming included audience workshop sessions in Bristol, Birmingham and Manchester and further research carried out with audiences in Colwyn Bay, Glasgow, Newcastle, Leicester, Gillingham and London. Audiences felt that the BBC needed to show commitment to continuing arts series, as well as one-off high impact and quality programmes. Following the consultations, the BBC created a new topical arts journalism unit to produce new programmes for BBC Two and BBC Four, and *The Culture Show* - a new weekly UK arts and culture programme launching this winter.

The Broadcasting Councils in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Advisory Councils in the English Regions hold regular public meetings which allow the public to comment on every aspect of BBC services:

- 'Accountability Breakfasts' have been held in Northern Ireland, at which groups of people with particular and specialised interests were invited to comment on what the BBC provides. Themes discussed included religious broadcasting, rural coverage, taste, decency and programmes for older people.
- Last year, in addition to regular large scale public meetings, the Broadcasting Council for Scotland was involved in around 20 meetings as part of a review of BBC Scotland's journalism. See section 1.3.
- The Broadcasting Council for Wales held several public meetings during 2003/04. During the year they also looked in detail at the provision of programming for young people and held discussion groups throughout Wales. This culminated in a one day forum for young people aged 18 to 25 from across Wales, which was held in Cardiff.
- The English Regions held over 90 formal and informal events last year at which licence payers were given the opportunity to put their views on BBC services

direct to programme makers and Advisory Council members. The Advisory Councils (via the English National Forum), for example, came up with recommendations for possible changes to local news coverage. This led to English Regions management reviewing local news coverage, and making some changes.

### **1.3 Public consultation**

The BBC is required in a number of circumstances to carry out a formal process of public consultation – for example, before it puts proposals to the Secretary of State for the launch of a new public service, or before it makes substantive changes to the nature of its UK public television or radio services.

BBC Scotland undertook a six-month review of news and current affairs programmes in 2003 – one of the biggest undertaken into news broadcasting in Scotland – in response to debate about the need for a ‘Scottish Six’ evening news programme. The review involved a series of public meetings, specialist consultative discussions and a major face-to-face survey involving more than 1,000 people throughout the country. The survey revealed high satisfaction with BBC Scotland’s news output, a strong appreciation of the current range of programmes but also an appetite for additional services.

Although 38% of respondents indicated interest in the ‘Scottish Six’ concept which would integrate Scottish, UK and international news in one programme, 45% favoured the current format, with 17% having no view. Research also revealed a high level of satisfaction with the current news proposition between 6pm and 7pm on BBC One, particularly the flagship *Reporting Scotland* programme. Against this background BBC Scotland proposed no change to the 6pm to 7pm News Hour.

The BBC regularly uses consultation with the public as a way of shaping its overall strategy. Such consultation involves publishing proposals, both in print and online, and gathering responses. The Broadcasting Councils for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the Regional and Local Advisory Councils in England, are consulted. Public meetings are organised where BBC executives can come face to face with audiences to talk about the plans. Presentations are arranged for groups with a particular interest, as well as for politicians and other stakeholders, to explain the plans and canvass views.

The results of consultation are used in two key ways – to shape final proposals which meet the expectations of audiences and to assess the public value which the proposals would deliver.

### **1.4 Audience feedback**

The BBC receives regular, spontaneous feedback from its audiences as well as inviting contact with them through its solicited contact service - BBC Information. This service received around 2.5 million contacts in 2003, including telephone calls, emails and letters through five centres located across the UK. Over 1 million contacts were unsolicited enquiries, comments, complaints and appreciations. The vast

majority of these were enquiries about programmes and services and on average only 8% were complaints.

Contacts with BBC Information are logged each day and reported on the BBC's intranet site and to senior managers. Audience feedback is presented at senior staff forums within the BBC, and BBC Information works to inform and influence programme makers to learn from audiences' concerns. BBC Information also works closely with programme divisions to provide responses to the public.

The Governor's Programmes Complaints Committee (PCC) is responsible for ensuring that complaints are properly handled by the BBC. During 2003/04 the PCC dealt with 1,640 complaints concerning 875 items. Of these 389 individual complaints were upheld – 11.6% of the total. The PCC also raised concerns about the complaint procedures, and that there had been a serious deterioration in the response time taken in 2003/04.

Proposals for change were accepted by the Governors and in July this year the BBC announced a new Code of Practice, a Head of Complaints and a streamlined complaints procedure. The new complaints process places emphasis on greater transparency, objectivity and accountability. It is based on the presumption that the licence payer is right, not wrong, and makes it easier for the public to make a complaint and obtain, where appropriate, a speedy correction.

Later this autumn a new online site - [bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://bbc.co.uk/complaints) - will be established, informing the public on complaints received and action taken, and to publish corrections.

The BBC has, throughout the current Charter period, used a variety of on-air programmes to enable people to air grievances, give praise or simply pass comment – from *Points of View* on television to *Feedback* and *Broadcasting House* on radio. A new BBC programme, *NewsWatch*, gives viewers the chance to put their comments directly to the makers of news and current affairs programmes and go behind the scenes to find out how decisions are taken. *NewsWatch* is accompanied by a dedicated website which explains the thinking behind editorial policies and makes it easier for viewers to contact programmes directly.

On-air interactions with audiences are a key element of the proposition for the new CBBC Channel, which is to have its own audience panel. In addition the BBC has used its website, [bbc.co.uk/info](http://bbc.co.uk/info), to make itself accessible to audiences – from hosting message boards which allow audiences to register their views to providing access to information on BBC plans and policies.

The BBC has made particular use of its website as part of the Charter Review process. As well as being able to find out more about the BBC's ideas for Charter Review and the future, [bbc.co.uk/thefuture](http://bbc.co.uk/thefuture) allows people to email their comments to the BBC, which publishes them for others to see. By September 2004, there have been over 310,000 page impressions for the website and the *Building Public Value* document has been downloaded over 137,000 times.

The BBC has actively consulted the public and opinion formers on its future in the context of the Charter Review process launched by the DCMS in December 2003. As well as promoting the DCMS' process, the BBC commissioned its own audience research. A series of focus groups and an omnibus survey among just under 1,000

adults looked at the key issues outlined in the DCMS consultation. In addition a series of 27 local radio phone-in programmes was broadcast across the country and a questionnaire on the [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk) homepage drew 3,200 responses.

The BBC Governors also draw on a network of 500 licence payers around the UK for advice on programmes and services as part of the Broadcasting, and Regional and Local Advisory, Councils.

A recent innovative experiment in using online feedback tools was *Viewpoint* ([bbc.co.uk/viewpoint](http://bbc.co.uk/viewpoint)). Over the last 18 months, the BBC has been piloting an online community for licence payers that facilitates meaningful dialogue between the BBC and its audiences. Some 1,600 members of the public took part in the initial pilot project, which ran from September 2003 to January 2004.

It is already clear that there is an enormous public appetite to engage in dialogue with the BBC in this way. *Viewpoint* demonstrated that the BBC can use the internet to get closer to its audiences and enter into a meaningful and mutually rewarding dialogue with them.

## Chapter 2 Serving communities

Chapter 1 set out how the BBC aims to understand and identify its audiences so that it can serve them more effectively. However, audiences are not just groups of people who happen to watch or listen to the BBC's services. In many cases they are specific communities with interests in common, which the BBC aims to help foster and facilitate. Some communities are served through broadcast and online content, reflecting or showcasing them. But, for others, the BBC has a direct connection with them, allowing it to more directly identify their expectations.

The BBC has a considerable capacity to bring together large numbers of people in an increasingly fragmented age. The BBC regularly broadcasts a range of national, cultural, sporting and other major events that contribute to shared experiences, bringing people together across the UK and uniting the country.

Recently, these have included the Queen's Golden Jubilee and the D-Day commemorations. The BBC has also brought relays of The World Cup, The Olympic Torch, the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, and great music festivals, such as The Proms and Glastonbury, to public events across the UK.

Forthcoming landmark events - such as the World Cup in 2006, Beijing Olympics in 2008, the bicentenary of Darwin's birth in 2009, the centenary of the break-out of World War I in 2014 and the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death in the middle of the next decade - mark significant occasions where the BBC will seek to create wonderful events that people can share.

But below the national level, the BBC not only serves geographic communities, it also has to serve the individual and collective needs of audiences, whether these are characterised by, say, age, class, ethnicity or interest. The BBC does this in a range of ways in addition to the straightforward broadcast – for example by partnering with other organisations, participating in campaigns and charities and through “public space broadcasting” (large outdoor screens).

The BBC has a long history of broadcasting that encourages and supports audiences to social action – be it fundraising or volunteering. Its best known television campaigns include *Children in Need* (now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year, it has raised over £350million) *Comic Relief* and *Sport Relief*, the monthly *Lifeline* appeal on BBC One and the weekly appeal on Radio 4.

Connecting and uniting communities is a key aspect of the BBC's contribution. Some programmes are designed for communities of interest and some are shaped by them. Others portray members of different communities, reflecting the wide diversity of the country.

The BBC has many such community initiatives across the nations and regions. They include *Roots*, in partnership with the Arts Council of England, to promote cultural diversity in the arts, and *Blast*, a partnership with over 400 arts and youth organisations to offer teenagers the chance to develop their talent in art, dance, music and film. So far *Blast* has reached over 250,000 teenagers and resulted in 20 hours of programmes on BBC Two.

The BBC has developed a strategic relationship with the Community Channel, a not for profit digital television channel “dedicated to inspiring people to do more with their lives”. The channel is a key partner in the BBC’s efforts to bring to audiences news, information and enthusiasm about the work of the voluntary and charity sector. Wherever possible, relevant BBC programming is made available to the channel once it has fulfilled its uses on BBC services, and the BBC is working to ensure audiences are aware of the channel.

The BBC has pioneered the concept of modern public space broadcasting during The Queen’s Golden Jubilee. Working with local authorities in ten major cities across the UK, ten temporary big screens were installed in public spaces to relay the Buckingham Palace concerts and ceremonial events into the heart of local communities. Four permanent screens have subsequently been installed in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Birmingham and six more are planned, each based on local partnerships. Interest in this project has been shown by over 20 other major cities.

The first permanent screen, in Exchange Square, Manchester, was launched in partnership with the City Council. It shows major sporting and musical events which regularly attract crowds of up to 10,000. Its regular schedule features local programming, news, arts, and a local listings service. The Cornerhouse Arts Centre has pioneered daily screenings for local film makers. The screen has even featured a university lecture by Professor Noam Chomsky, which drew an audience of 650 people.

The BBC also takes to the road during the summer with many major music festivals, including The Proms and Radio 1 events. One initiative is News and Sport on Tour, which visited six locations in the UK in 2004 to give the public a ‘hands on’ experience of news and sports bulletins.

The BBC is shortly to publish its first corporate social responsibility report which will describe how we act as a responsible corporate citizen to strengthen and enrich communities across the UK and internationally. The BBC benchmarks its external performance in Business in the Community’s corporate responsibility index. Last year it was ranked 42<sup>nd</sup> overall and first among broadcasters.

### **Case Study: BBC Open Centres and multimedia learning buses**

The BBC has explored new ways to connect with communities, including BBC Open Centres and Community Buses, to bring the benefits of digital technology to thousands of new users. There are currently 12 multimedia learning buses and Open Centres.

BBC buses combine mobile broadcasting studios with a suite of computers and take these facilities out to towns and villages, factory floors and community centres. People can come onboard, chat to the bus team and discover how computers can benefit them. Qualified tutors help people to explore the world of computing, surf the internet or to take the first steps towards an IT qualification.

Open Centres provide these opportunities in city centres, opening up local radio station buildings and studios to audiences in Hull, Sheffield, Blackburn, Brighton, Liverpool, Stoke and Gloucester. Central to the success of the Open Centres and buses has been the partnerships forged with local councils and local education providers. The BBC's involvement gives these partners the opportunity to find new learners, who may then sign up for a range of digital courses.

# Chapter 3 Audiences in the digital age

The media landscape is changing more radically and rapidly than ever before. Digital technology is transforming broadcasting, It offers viewers and listeners unprecedented control over what programmes they choose and when they watch or listen. This chapter looks at how the BBC's television, radio and online services aim to identify and engage the range of its audiences and communities.

## 3.1 Changing audiences in a changing world

The move away from traditional analogue broadcasting into a digital and online environment means, for example:

- digital television penetration in the UK stands at 55% of all households, but even in these multi-channel homes the five main public service broadcasting channels account for over 50% share of the audience
- sales of digital radio sets doubled in 2003, with the number in use expected to reach 1 million by the end of this year
- internet household penetration has grown from under 5% in 1996 to over 50% in 2004.

Today's BBC is adapting well to the profound challenges posed by the transition to digital. It is a tri-media broadcaster set up to serve different audiences and communities with both analogue and digital programmes and services across a wide range of genres. The BBC is playing a leading role in promoting the take-up of digital television, radio and the internet – for example through the launch of Freeview.

The continuing challenge for the BBC is to ensure that its programmes and services keep in step with changes in the marketplace, in technology and in audience behaviour as well as being innovative and of high quality.

In terms of demographics, the make-up and media consumption habits of audiences have also changed significantly over the last 10 years. Television audiences appear to be getting older, while younger generations spend more time online, playing games and listening to the radio. People increasingly want to access content when and where they want it, not when broadcasters want to deliver it, and to create a "my service", rather than repackaged linear channels.

Another key trend is that the UK is becoming a mature multicultural nation. Between 1991 and 2001, the ethnic population of the UK grew by 54%, compared with 4% for the total UK population; ethnic minorities now represent just under 8% of the overall population and are projected to grow as rapidly over the next decade, particularly in urban areas.

In this rapidly changing broadcasting environment, the BBC has delivered new content and services that match and reflect the changing expectations of audiences. In particular by:

- launching new services, targeting underserved sections of the audience – particularly younger audiences and ethnic minorities
- ensuring that these services uphold and celebrate the best of the UK’s cultural and creative heritage but also provide space to explore more diverse and developing cultures
- provide a broad range of programmes designed to connect with the widest possible audience and provide a modern reflection of UK culture today.

The BBC now has a coherent channel portfolio for the digital era, with five different types of service in order to serve all its audiences:

- mainstream services (eg BBC One)
- audience-targeted services (eg 1Xtra)
- special-interest services (eg Radio 3)
- specific services for the nations, regions and localities of the UK (eg BBC Scotland)
- international services (eg BBC World Service radio)

## **3.2 The role of individual services**

### **Television**

An independent survey conducted for the BBC in 2004<sup>1</sup> asked people what types of television programme were most important for a public service broadcaster to provide. The top eight responses were news, regional news, wildlife, current affairs, soaps, consumer programmes, education and British comedy. The results showed that audiences want a broad range of programmes that go beyond any narrow ‘high ground’ concept of public service broadcasting. This analysis is supported by similar research from Ofcom.

BBC Television therefore has a wide ranging role in reflecting and connecting audiences, from their broadest concerns to specific issues and stories. It does so across a portfolio of analogue and digital channels that reflects mainstream interests and specific cultural passions.

Understanding of audience expectations has to be integrated into the commissioning process to enable the BBC to produce programmes that are informative, educative and entertaining.

At the broadest end of the spectrum, BBC One broadcasts coverage of the UK’s significant sporting, cultural and ceremonial events. This includes The Proms, Glastonbury, the 60th anniversary of the D-Day commemoration, Trooping the Colour, the Remembrance Day Ceremony at the Cenotaph, and major national and international sporting events including the Olympics, Euro 2004, Wimbledon, the Grand National, the FA Cup, and Ascot.

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<sup>1</sup> Human Capital/Martin Hamblin GfK, A Study measuring the value of the BBC

BBC One has a unique significance as it accounts for approximately one third of all BBC programme spending and many people use it as a measure of all BBC services. Research shows audiences judge it to be offering the best quality in 12 out of 22 programme genres including key ones such as news, current affairs, original drama and comedy<sup>2</sup>.

For the smaller, newer, digital, networks the BBC commissions programmes that will appeal to more targeted audiences. BBC Three, for example, has a mission to reflect the things that matter to young British adults by covering subjects closer to their life stage. That has included factual programmes such as *Body Hits* - which addresses health and behaviour issues particularly relevant to this age group.

BBC Four's ambition is be British television's most culturally enriching channel and since its launch in March 2002 it has become the most watched channel of its type. The channel has built partnerships with cultural institutions to deliver public value to the wider arts community.

The BBC endeavours to provide relevant and contemporary programmes to specific groups with shared interests. It provides broadcasts for a range of faiths through coverage of acts of worship and key events in the religious calendar. These range from regular programmes such as *Songs of Praise* and *Carols from Kings College Cambridge*, to *Rosh Hashanah* and documentaries including *Station Of Islam*, *I Am A Mohel* and *Hand Of God. The Heaven and Earth Show*, and programmes such as *Does Meditation Work?*, extend interest beyond traditional religion to groups involved in wider interpretations of faith and ethics.

Followers of the UK's creative and cultural life can look forward to two new cultural, arts and media journalism programmes - *The Culture Show* (BBC Two) and *The Desk* (BBC Four) - which encourage greater media literacy and analysis. The BBC provides extensive coverage of key moments in the UK cultural calendar and exhibitions and events around the country - for example through *The Arts Reports* strand (BBC Four), coverage of the Edinburgh Festival, and by broadcasting both large and small music events such as the Mercury Prize and Mobos, and events that bring people together and express local culture such as the Cambridge Folk and Brecon Jazz festivals.

Both BBC Two and BBC Four also offer opportunities for audiences to explore more specialist passions including gardening, motoring, classical, jazz and folk music, through performance, biography and documentary to foreign language cinema. Websites and online discussion groups offer opportunities for 'virtual communities' to come together to exchange views and ideas on these programmes.

The BBC also generates its own events to connect people through their localities and passions - engaging viewers to pursue ideas and actions together beyond simply watching programmes. Notable examples include *Britain Goes Wild* (Nature), *The Big Read* (Literature), *British Battlefields* (Military History) and *Restoration* (Heritage).

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<sup>2</sup> Licence fee value survey, 2003

### **Case Study: *Restoration***

The BBC Two show offered lovers of British heritage the opportunity to save an historic building of their choice from around the UK. *Restoration* was a multi-media cross-platform event with viewers encouraged to actively get involved as well as communing around a special website and message board and, ultimately, telephone and interactive television voting. 2.2m votes were registered throughout the first series (1.3m for the Final alone) raising over £500,000 for The Restoration Fund on top of the Heritage Lottery Fund's £3m donation. The series led to a significant increase in visitors to the listed buildings and other heritage sites.

The BBC aims for distinctiveness across each of its services. Audiences clearly believe that the BBC's services overall stand apart from others. For example, by the end of 2003, the BBC was responsible for three of the four best regarded television channels in the arts generally. Different BBC services perform different roles and serve different audiences, and are described below.

**BBC One** aims to be the UK's most valued television channel with the broadest range of quality programmes of any UK network. The channel is committed to widening the appeal of all genres to a broad audience. BBC One is committed to covering national events and issues. It offers news across the day, current affairs and debates, consumer affairs, drama, comedy and great sporting events. It intends to reflect the best of the UK's diverse culture with the broadest range of British programming, taking risks and innovating as it strives to make serious subjects such as the arts and music relevant to a wide audience.

**BBC Two** combines serious factual subjects, including arts output, with original comedy and drama to bring challenging, intelligent television to a broad audience. Ambition and innovation are key values. The channel aims to reflect and contribute to the UK's cultural life and to showcase new talent, often working in collaboration with BBC Three. It covers many of the UK's big cultural events, while aiming to bring the cream of the world's creative culture to UK audiences. It is committed to deliver at least 200 hours of arts and music programming in 2004/05.

**BBC Three** is unique in offering an ambitious mix of programmes reflecting the lives and culture of young adults. Its highly diverse schedule includes new British drama and animation, comedy, music, news and arts programming. It has a vital role in nurturing new talent.

**BBC Four** is for audiences in search of even greater depth and range in their cultural viewing. It aims to capture the energy of the UK's creative and cultural life and to contribute to it – across performance, literature, and the visual arts. It also showcases international film, with a commitment to premiere at least 20 films a year.

The recently published independent review of the BBC's digital services, commissioned by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, recommended

broadening the appeal of BBC Three and BBC Four. The BBC welcomed the review's constructive criticism and will be responding in full by the end of November 2004.

**CBeebies** is aimed at pre-school children and built around the national pre-school curriculum. Since its launch in February 2002 it has become the most watched children's channel in multi-channel households. It has received very high praise from the public who place great value on its friendly, safe, trustworthy environment, which is advertising free, educationally focused and built up of mainly UK programming. CBeebies offers high quality, original content that is largely developed by pre-school specialists: for example *Balamory* introduces very young children to the concept of a diverse community (it includes disabled and ethnic minority actors in its cast), helping them to learn social and interactive skills they will need in life.

**The CBBC Channel** was also launched in February 2002 with a clear commitment to a mixed schedule of news, drama, comedy, entertainment and factual programmes for six to twelve year olds. The channel aims to be distinctive in a multi-channel market place where the existing children's channels mostly show acquired and imported programmes. The philosophy underlying the channel is 'learning through fun', and children are encouraged to participate in the channel's output through live programming supported by online and interactive content. Drama, factual and entertainment are strong components of the programming mix - Last year it broadcast over 700 hours of children's drama and 1,500 hours of factual programming.

The independent review of the BBC's digital services found that CBeebies is "a triumph and an exemplary PSB [public service broadcaster] service for preschool children" and that CBBC is a "distinctive service with high quality UK-produced content free from advertisements, covering a wide range of genres and with a high proportion of original production."

### **Case Study: Children's programmes**

From the early days of *Muffin the Mule*, *Listen with Mother* and *Bill and Ben* through *Blue Peter* to modern day successes like *Balamory* and the *Teletubbies*, the BBC has been providing distinctive, interactive, educational and entertaining children's programmes for over 80 years. Last year the BBC broadcast 9,500 hours of children's programmes across television. On Radio, BBC 7, Radio 3 and Radio 4 introduced a new generation to 1,540 hours of speech radio - while 2 million children a month used the children's website.

Education informs the BBC's attitude to all of its children's output. From learning through play, to GCSE students accessing *Bitesize* the BBC provides children and young people with a wide range of services that entertain, inform and educate. In 2003, 69% of 15 to 16 year olds used GCSE Bitesize. Broadcasting on BBC One, BBC Two and the CBBC Channel, the children's news programme *Newsround* (now in its 40<sup>th</sup> year) reaches 1 million children a day.

### **Case Study: *The Big Read***

*The Big Read* has been one of the BBC's most successful partnerships of recent years. It drew on all of the BBC's services and involved 4,200 libraries, schools and bookshops in the quest to find the UK's best loved books. Over two million people watched the final of the public vote on BBC Two and over 750,000 people voted while 5.8 million hits were recorded on the Big Read website. The project caught the public imagination and led to animated debates in the press. More than 2000 new reading groups were created with sales and loans of the most popular books soaring.

## **Radio**

BBC Radio reaches just over 66% of all homes and accounts for over half of all radio listening hours in the UK each week. On average, listeners spend almost 18 hours each week listening to BBC Radio services. The networks are both presenter and programme led and are themselves communities of interest maintaining direct relationships with their audiences using email, text, letters and telephone calls.

However, the radio landscape in Britain is also changing fundamentally as a result of the digital revolution in technology.

The way people access radio is also rapidly changing, with listeners increasingly tuning in via digital television, the internet, mobile phones and DAB digital radio. Each week nearly 9 million UK adults now listen via digital television, and more than 3m listen via the internet. 15.5 million hours of BBC Radio output were listened to via the internet in the second quarter of 2004

The BBC has been responding to changing tastes and audience use and is leading the development of digital radio. It has created strong new national digital stations - 1Xtra, 6 Music, BBC7, Five Live Sports Extra, BBC Asian Network - that complement our existing analogue stations. The commissioning for the digital stations remains with the controllers of the analogue networks.

The BBC offers a portfolio of radio stations in order to cater for a broad range of demographics, regions, music and speech preferences. These include five UK-wide networks (Radios 1, 2, 3, 4 and Five Live), three national English language services (Radios Scotland, Ulster and Wales), two national language services (Radio Cymru and Radio Nan Gaidheal), a local service in Northern Ireland (Radio Foyle) and 40 local services across England.

The BBC has also developed the Radio Player which offers listeners the opportunity to listen to programmes again for up to seven days following their live transmission. As more programmes are made available via this method, monthly audio on demand requests for BBC Radio output have increased from just over 1 million in June 2002 to almost 6.5 million in March 2004.

## National Radio Services

**Radio 1** is committed to playing the best new music and delivering a comprehensive range of live studio sessions, concerts and festival broadcasts. The network aims to cover all young music genres with a wide-ranging playlist and a strong line-up of specialist DJs. Music programming is augmented by tailored speech output – including news, documentaries and advice campaigns.

**1Xtra** is aimed at young urban audiences that felt they were not served by the BBC. It offers a service unavailable elsewhere on UK network radio and gives strong backing to the UK's contemporary black music industry. 1Xtra plays the best of contemporary black music, with a strong emphasis on delivering high-quality live music and supporting new British artists. It showcases important events such as the Notting Hill Carnival as well as bringing listeners a bespoke news service, regular discussion programmes and specially commissioned documentaries, information and advice.

**BBC Radio 2** combines popular music and culture with a diverse range of specialist music, features, documentaries, light entertainment and readings. It is the UK's most popular music station with an average weekly reach of 12.9 million listeners. As with Radio 1, the BBC now collects quantitative data to monitor the distinctiveness of the network's content. Analysis conducted twice in 2003/04 showed that in each sample week well over 1,000 songs played in Radio 2 were not heard on any other competitor measured. In addition, Radio 2 played a broader range of popular, specialist and live music than its competitors. Many of the programmes are shaped around requests, creating a direct relationship with listeners.

**BBC Radio 3** aims to provide a broad spectrum of classical music, jazz, world music, drama and arts discussions. It is the home of The Proms – the world's biggest music festival – while the regular schedule focuses on presenting live music, particularly from the BBC's own orchestras and singers as well as specially recorded music from across the UK and beyond.

**BBC Radio 4** broadcasts a rich mix of news and current affairs programmes, drama, readings and comedy. News and current affairs provide the spine of the network. Agenda setting programmes like *Today*, *The World at One*, *PM* and *The World Tonight* have built up strong relationships with their audiences and use email, text and online websites to develop and strengthen communications with them. The use of new digital technology to enhance the listener's experience extends across the network. One innovation has been The *Archers*' text alert in which mobile phone users can receive text alerts on developments in the radio serial. Radio 4 commissions around 13,000 programmes a year.

**BBC Radio Five Live** broadcasts live news and sport 24 hours a day, aiming to present in-depth, wide-ranging stories and analysis of national and international events as they happen. It sets out to cover subjects and debates that inform, entertain and involve news and sports fans of all ages, with particular emphasis on 25 to 44 year olds. The network also provides extensive live events coverage, supported by the BBC's global newsgathering operations and portfolio of sports rights.

**BBC Five Live Sports Extra** is a part-time extension of BBC Radio Five Live, aimed at bringing a greater choice of action to sports fans.

**BBC 6 Music** was launched in March 2002 for the underserved audience of 25 to 44 year old lovers of popular music. It offers current releases outside the mainstream, new concert and session tracks, and unique access to the work of artists from the last 40 years through the BBC Sound Archive. It aims to provide a social and cultural context through music news, documentaries and debate, and is committed to providing interactive content.

**BBC 7** is a speech-based service providing pure entertainment to attract a new audience, particularly children, to speech radio. The network offers comedy, drama and readings, mainly from the BBC archive. BBC 7 has played a significant role in developing the market for DAB Digital radio. Research last year showed that 68% of people who had bought new receivers had done so because of new services, with 26% mentioning BBC 7 as the service they wanted.

**BBC Asian Network** was relaunched as national network in October 2002 to meet the demand from British Asians for a national speech based service offering music, news, sport, debate, entertainment and drama. It broadcasts primarily in English but also in a range of languages spoken by UK Asians and now reaches one in five British Asians.

## Online

The BBC is a tri-media organisation and much of its television and radio output is supported and extended by online and interactive services. The BBC's new media services complement and enrich our broadcast services, and deliver public value by enabling people to communicate with each other in communities built around shared passions, interests and localities.

More than 10 million people a month visit [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk) to access over 2 million pages of text, graphics and audio visual content. As well as extensive interactive services on the internet, the BBC also offers interactive television through BBCi. This provides both 'always-on' information in both text and video, and interactive television programmes through the red button, on all major digital platforms. In May 2004 10 million people accessed BBCi's 'always-on' offering, while the popularity of 'red button' interactive television programming was demonstrated during the 2004 Olympic Games when an estimated 13 million<sup>3</sup> people accessed the service.

Two-way digital technologies offer unparalleled flexibility and control for the user and the BBC is uniquely positioned to use its content, its national and local networks and its trusted brand to become a catalyst for a diverse range of communities of interest

It provides safe online services that connect people in new ways or create new communities of interest and opportunities. *iCan* attempts to engage people who feel disconnected with the political process. The BBC hosts many communities of interest

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<sup>3</sup> Four million viewers pressed red (Estimated figures for consumption on Freeview and Cable digital platforms). Nine million digital satellite viewers pressed red (figures provided by BARB).

via [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk)'s online discussion boards. Millions of messages are hosted every month, as people discuss topics ranging from cricket to coping with bulimia.

The BBC also provides 55 *Where I Live sites* websites across the nations and regions which offer audiences a place on the internet to find information, news, entertainment, sport, travel and weather relevant to life where they live.

### **Case Study: WW2 People's war**

Launched in June 2003, with the intention of collecting photos and stories from World War 2 veterans and their families, the site rapidly developed into a dynamic, highly valuable, living history archive. In addition to articles from military experts, people swapped their own experiences to create a dynamic narrative. Partnerships with museums, libraries, Age Concern, and the support of regional outreach officers funded by Culture Online, have helped generate more than 10,000 original stories.

This is a new and exciting kind of relationship between the BBC and the public and has generated enormous interest and demand. From June 2003, when the project started, to June 2004 requests to view or join in rose from over 18,000 to over 445,000 a month. Website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2/>

One of the overall strategic objectives for the BBC's new media services is to strengthen accountability to its audiences. It has introduced a number of measures to assess audience perception of quality, including the questions in the annual online survey of users. A "rate this site" service is being piloted, enabling users to give basic feedback on quality all the time. These will be incorporated into a quarterly review process, informing discussion over audience views on quality.

### **Nations, regions, local television, radio and online services**

At least half of the UK population consumes BBC local and regional content each week. The BBC's 6.30 pm regional news attracts the highest audience of any television news slot on any channel. 11 million people listen to BBC local radio. Over 8 million unique users a month log on to the BBC's local websites.

All BBC local and national radio services support local activity and broadcast a wide range of content. It ranges from the purely practical with local traffic and weather to the interactivity of radio phone-in shows and debates. They celebrate the UK's rich and diverse cultures, in particular seeking out voices which are seldom heard – through projects like *Voices* and *Digital Storytelling*. Twenty-three of the local radio stations in England carry over 67 hours of specialist language programming each week, including Bengali, Cantonese, Cornish, Guernsey French, Gujarati, Hindi, Mandarin, Mirpuri, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Somali and Urdu.

BBC services promote local talent, providing airtime for new and established performers and writers, as well as promoting local cultural events. The nations' services are the sole broadcast outlet for some traditional music, such as piping in Scotland. The stations showcase new local music and comedy and support new writing, with English local radio stations broadcasting dramas ranging from pantomimes to plays, often performed to live audiences in local theatres.