

Belfast independent local radio licence applications

Questions and responses: Citylife

These are the responses received from Citylife to the non-confidential questions asked by Ofcom regarding the group's application for the Belfast licence.

1. Please clarify whether the group would commit itself to a daytime speech minimum of 50% as indicated by the Form at (p.45) or 55% as detailed under the provision of local material (p.42).

Based on the proposed programme schedule we calculated our average daytime speech to be 55%. In the format we committed to a minimum speech commitment of 50% to allow for a 5% swing on a daily basis to account for any unforeseen circumstances.

We considered that 50% to 60% speech was sufficient to allow us to seriously challenge BBC Radio Ulster at all they do reasonably well (i.e. speech) and still allow sufficient airtime for music, which is the programming element where Ulster performs less well.

As we are talking about a variance of up to 3 minutes an hour, we would be prepared to commit to a minimum daytime speech level of 55%.

2. Please clarify how the term 'current' would be defined in the context of the music policy described in the Format.

'Current' for Belfast Citylife is deemed to refer to a track that is up to 12 months old with recurrent being no more than 2 years old.

3. The Format contains the following commitment: "A daily topical phone-in/debate programme is a key feature of daytime output, as is an hourly news programme at 18.00" (p.45). Could you please clarify whether this is a commitment to a news programme every hour as indicated by the term "hourly" or to an hour-long news programme as indicated by the sample schedule (p.44)?

This should have said "an hour-long" news programme as per the sample programme schedule and we would agree to an amendment to our submitted format to reflect that correction.

4. Please define the type of speech the group is referring to in its commitment to 'general interest issues'.

"General interest issues", outside of peak, is an all encompassing term for what we say in between the records. Our presenters will comment and enter into discussions with guests and listeners on a number of subjects outside of

our commitment to the day's news. When the topic is not about lifestyle or entertainment matters then it's considered a "general interest issue".

A presenter may refer to something they have seen or something happening in the city that is not being covered in our news bulletins. This will include general chat concerning issues that are of interest and importance to residents in the city. For instance, at Citybeat, the presenters are still talking about the Northern Bank robbery that happened on the 20th December. This is old news but still of general interest to our listeners who call in daily with their opinions about where the £27m has gone and who did it. Recently, listeners' general interest issues have included times for last orders in pubs, the banning of smoking in public places and the prosecution of a woman who was eating an apple whilst driving.

5. Please provide information regarding the methodology employed for the focus group research (please include the size and composition of each group and when and where each was conducted).

Millward Brown Ulster, based in Belfast, was engaged to recruit two groups of eight attendees and perform focus group discussions with them at its Belfast premises at 94 University Street Road at 6.30pm and 8.15pm on 28th October 2004.

The brief was for a cross section of society in each group. The groups were split into 10 year and 15 year age bands. The first group consisted of seven 55-70 year olds and the second group of eight 45-54 year olds. The precise composition of each group and a copy of our brief are included confidentially with this letter.

Millward Brown conducted telephone interviews to attract a representative sample of attendees in terms of age, sex and listening habits (we also enclose a copy of the screening questionnaire in our confidential reply). Each group consisted of an equal number of heavy and light radio listeners and we ensured that all respondents were BBC Radio Ulster listeners.

Each attendee completed a questionnaire on arrival, primarily to relax them and give them something to do whilst we waited for a full complement to arrive (copy enclosed confidentially). The sessions were all supervised by an experienced mediator for Millward Brown. Each session was conducted in a viewing room with a two-way mirror and was also recorded on tape and video. Nichola Atkinson, our application manager viewed the proceedings, as did CN Radio's Group Programme Director and the Programme Controller from Belfast Citybeat. All attendees were made aware that they were being taped and viewed. Attendees were not informed of the client or the ultimate purpose of the meeting other than to gather intelligence as to their radio listening habits and preferences.

The supervisor followed a pre-prepared and pre-agreed discussion guide (enclosed confidentially with this letter) and only veered from this when absolutely necessary.

The groups discussed the current radio consumption of each attendee, their views on BBC Radio Ulster and their likes and dislikes on certain radio features. Three music montages were also played to gauge reaction prior to this being tested in a quantitative survey through NOP World. The Citylife proposal was presented and discussed in full.

The groups lasted for an hour and a quarter each. Millward Brown delivered scripts of the meetings and a summary report on the focus group findings.

6. On what basis did the group create its three potential music formats?

The sole objective of all our music research was to create a music proposition that would be most attractive to 45+ BBC Radio Ulster listeners and extend audience choice in the local commercial market, particularly to Downtown Radio.

In this respect, we compared the results of our general music testing within the market gap research with the music formats that Downtown and BBC Radio Ulster have adopted, gathered via our monitoring. We felt that it was not only important to identify individual genres, tracks and artists that would be popular amongst our target market, but to encapsulate the “feel” of the proposed format by building a montage around the tempo, energy and mood of particular tracks that would make up our format.

We were very well aware that some UK radio groups had spent a lot of time and money researching the music likes and dislikes of the older end of our proposed target market, in fact members of our team had been heavily involved in that process. However, our research was suggesting that the optimum music mix was slightly different from that played on other UK commercial radio stations aimed at more mature audiences.

So we decided to test a selection of tracks that typified the Magic format (station A), the Saga format (station B) and then one created from the tastes & interests research we performed (station C) - the Citybeat montage. We selected artists and tracks from the websites of both Magic and Saga. Saga's we took from the top 200 list which was polled from its audience. All formats were designed to appeal to 45+s.

We previewed these montages first in the focus groups, see below. We had a clear and open mind and were prepared to reflect the results of the research in our application whatever the outcome. The majority of our focus group attendees found the Citylife montage to be the most appealing, with our youngest attendees ranking the Magic montage as equally attractive. The Saga montage did not perform as well as the other two. In summary:

55-70s	Magic	Saga	Citylife
Fantastic	1		3
Pretty Fantastic	5		3
Better than Ok		6	1
OK	1		
Naff		1	

45-54s	Magic	Saga	Citylife
Fantastic	5	1	5
Pretty Fantastic			1
Better than Ok	2	2	1
OK	1	3	1
Naff		2	

Note: the descriptions were devised by the first focus group.

None of the montages were hugely disliked by any section of the focus group attendees. We were concerned that “Magic” would least extend choice against other stations in the market and that “Saga” was too niche to appeal to all of Radio Ulster’s 45+ audience, but we had sufficient confidence that the “Citylife” formulae would be sufficiently attractive to our target audience.

We then proceeded to test them all again in our demand research across 750 respondents, rather than just 15 respondents, this time.

7. Why would the group include both 50s and 60s music in its Format given that the former was not tested within the quantitative research and the focus groups’ appear to indicate that Radio Ulster should play less of these era-based genres.

The dilemma, with a full service station targeting an audience that spans 25 to 30 years, is that you can’t please all of the listeners all the time. This is no different to the problems that face BBC Radio Ulster today and it does not impede the station from attracting a large proportion of 45+s to the station.

All of our music research confirms the high appeal to older listeners of 60s and 70s music. However, our younger focus group attendees expressed a wish for more 80s and 90s music which is entirely natural for a 45 year old to say if they happened to have listened to a lot of 60s and 70s music that day. Of course this was countered by respondents in the older focus group requesting more 60s & 70s music.

In reality we believe we can satisfy both of those listeners, because not only will we play more tracks in total than BBC Radio Ulster (in accordance with the wishes of 45+s who require more music in their ideal mix than Ulster offers), but on our day of monitoring 50% of its output was music from the last 5 years, including 33% of its music output being current material. Therefore, we will appeal to our target audience more than Radio Ulster does, because

we will play more 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s tracks than Radio Ulster and we will play some 50s.

Although 50s music does not form an essential cornerstone of our music policy, we do believe it should be included for completeness. Tracks from artists such as Nat King Cole, Peggy Lee, Cliff Richard, Elvis, Little Richard, etc do have strong artistic association with the older members of our target audience. Therefore, we believe that playing some 50s tracks will allow us to provide depth and variety to our music output and this will improve our appeal to our audience and provide familiarity to some of the oldest listeners that migrate to us from Radio Ulster (as, although 50% of its music was from within the last 5 years, Radio Ulster did play some 50s tracks – 3 tracks out of 45 (7%) - on our monitoring day).