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Audience attitudes towards offensive language on television and radio

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This report is dedicated to Nigel Jackson, Group Head
Public Sector and Qualitative Specialists Teams at Synovate.
1966-2009

Note: Since the publication of this report on 8th June 2010, it has come to Ofcom's attention that there was an error in the report in relation to the description of Clip 15 'Radio interview with John Lennon'.

The report incorrectly stated that the clip contained the word 'cunt' within a song by John Lennon featured during the interview. The research comprised of 30 focus groups and in-depth interviews among 129 participants. During this process, in 7 instances, it was thought that the word 'cunt' had been mentioned in the lyrics and was discussed in relation to this clip.

However, the actual lyrics to the song featured in the interview do not contain the word 'cunt'. Synovate has therefore reviewed the evidence and findings in relation to this clip excluding those 7 instances mentioned above. There were no major changes to the conclusions as published in the report on 8th June 2010. However, for the sake of accuracy, the report has been revised and was reissued on 19th August 2010.

Foreword from Ofcom

Ofcom is required under the Communications Act (“the Act”) to draw up a Broadcasting Code which sets out standards for the content of television and radio services. The Code is drafted in light of the European Convention on Human Rights (“the Convention”). In particular, the right to freedom of expression is expressed in Article 10 of the Convention. It includes the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas.

The Code sets out clear principles and rules which allow broadcasters freedom for creativity, and audiences freedom to exercise viewing and listening choices, while securing the wider requirements in the Act. Accordingly, the rules in the Code seek to ensure, in a manner that best guarantees an appropriate level of freedom of expression, that members of the public, and in particular under-eighteens, are adequately protected from the broadcast of harmful and/or offensive material, including potentially offensive language.

In providing this protection the Act requires that broadcasters apply “generally accepted standards”¹ to the content of television and radio services. In applying the rules in the Code which relate to offensive language, Ofcom must therefore keep itself informed, and updated, on generally accepted standards. One of the ways this is achieved is through commissioning research to understand public attitudes towards offensive language.

Ofcom recognises that the use of language changes over time. Likewise the impact of the offence it may cause also changes over time. In the five years since Ofcom last published research on attitudes to offensive language, we have received complaints about the use of terms which may not have previously been considered potentially offensive. In addition some words are now considered of heightened sensitivity and

¹ Please see Annex 3 for Glossary.

offence and are seldom broadcast, while other terms are considered less offensive than in previous years. Therefore the purpose of Ofcom commissioning independent research by Synovate, was to provide an up to date understanding of public attitudes to offensive language in order to inform Ofcom, viewers, listeners and broadcasters.

The research was qualitative in nature. This means it explored the views of a range of participants across the UK, and provided insights into their opinions based on a variety of examples of broadcast material. It was not a quantitative study, so the results do not seek to provide a definitive measure of the proportion of the UK population who hold specific opinions. Rather, the value of the qualitative approach was that it enabled a contextualised consideration of views of different offensive terms.

Given that offensive language is at times targeted at, and of particular relevance to, minority groups, the design of the project sought to research and reflect the views of participants from a selection of these groups. This was an important element in the research and a series of in-depth research interviews with certain minority groups was undertaken.

The value of this research is that it not only helps provide a picture of acceptability in relation to offensive words, it also reveals that viewers and listeners consider a number of factors, or principles, when judging how offensive language is when broadcast. It is these principles in particular which guide their views on the acceptability of such language, and which are explored in the research findings. This research is provided to viewers, listeners and broadcasters as part of Code guidance² in relation to the broadcast of potentially offensive language. It will also, together with a range of other contextual factors, help to inform Ofcom's consideration of viewer and listener complaints.

² <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/ifi/guidance/bguidance/>

Please note this report contains language which some may find offensive.

The opinions expressed in this report are the personal responses of the participants who took part in the research and do not reflect the views of Synovate UK or Ofcom.

This report was commissioned to inform Ofcom and broadcasters about the range of public attitudes towards offensive language on television and radio. The research findings will help Ofcom carry out its statutory duty to ensure that generally accepted standards are applied to the content of television and radio services so as to provide protection to the public from offensive material.

The research will therefore contribute to the contextual factors Ofcom takes into consideration when investigating complaints made by members of the public.

1. Executive summary

1.1 Background and objectives

The rules in the Broadcasting Code (the Code) seek to ensure, in a manner that best guarantees an appropriate level of freedom of expression, that members of the public, and in particular under-eighteens, are adequately protected from the broadcast of harmful and/or offensive material, including potentially offensive language. In providing this protection, the Code requires that broadcasters apply generally accepted standards to the content of television and radio services.

In order to help inform future decisions about complaints relating to offensive language, Ofcom commissioned a programme of qualitative research to provide an up to date understanding of public attitudes towards offensive language. The research was designed to provide evidence on current levels of tolerance and offence, how perceptions differ by context, and how this varies by different demographic groups within the population, including by age, gender and socio-economic group. The sample included some minority audiences, including people from black and minority ethnic

(BME) communities, lesbian, gay and bisexual people; transgender people³; travellers; and disabled people, including family members of disabled people.

The overarching objectives for the research were:

- To establish a barometer of potentially offensive terms and an understanding of generally accepted standards in relation to potentially offensive words and phrases within a range of contexts on television and radio; and
- To understand how viewers and listeners decide what is considered generally acceptable/unacceptable in terms of potentially offensive language on television and radio.

The objectives for conducting research with minority audiences, where some potentially offensive words might be seen as linked to or aimed at a particular group, were:

- To gain an overall understanding of generally accepted standards regarding the use of offensive language on television and radio; and
- To understand the views of a sample of people from specific minority groups on the use of discriminatory language⁴ relating to these groups on television and radio.

1.2 Overview of approach

The research involved a programme of qualitative group discussions and in-depth interviews with a general UK sample, plus additional small groups and in-depth

³ Throughout this report, transgender people refers to people who find their gender identity or gender expression differs in some way from the gender they were labelled at birth [definition used in research carried out by the Scottish Transgender Alliance. See Annex 5 for more details], and who identify themselves as a woman with a transsexual background, a man with a transsexual background, a male to female/trans woman or a female to male/trans man.

⁴ By discriminatory language, we mean potentially offensive words which may be seen as linked to or aimed at a particular group.

interviews with minority audiences, where some potentially offensive words might be seen as linked to or aimed at a particular group.

All participants were sent three DVDs of television and radio clips that contained potentially offensive language. Ofcom's selection of these clips was based on its experience of complaints about offensive language received from viewers and listeners since 2005⁵. The clips were representative of material broadcast pre-watershed and post-watershed across a range of channels and types of programming (see Appendices 7 to 10).

Participants were asked to review the clips and record their views on each before attending a group discussion or interview. The clips were then used as stimulus for wider discussion in the groups and interviews. See Appendices 11 to 14 for the discussion guides.

An indication of the weighting of participants' views is given where appropriate in the report. The term 'many' is used when the view was expressed frequently within and across the group discussions and depth interviews. The term 'some' is used when the view was expressed occasionally but across a number of group discussions and depth interviews, and the term 'few' is used when the view was expressed by a small number of participants only.

⁵ Ofcom previously undertook consumer research into the general public's views on offensive language in 2005. See <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/radio/reports/bcr/language.pdf>. This current research was commissioned to provide an up to date picture of the public's views on offensive language on television and radio.

1.3 Summary of key findings

1.3.1 Introduction

These findings are based on participants' discussions of the clips containing a range of potentially offensive language in a wide range of programmes.

The research study focused on what participants thought was 'generally acceptable' in terms of language on television and radio. Participants were therefore asked to think not only about their personal reactions and views, but to consider what they thought to be acceptable when thinking about other people and the wider viewing or listening public as a whole.

Participants' responses to the potentially offensive language varied depending on the context of each of the clips. Participants' views on individual clips were also influenced by their age, gender and personal experiences. That said, the study has identified common themes within the contextual factors that participants considered when judging the acceptability of potentially offensive language. These themes are referred to as 'principles' throughout this report. Participants drew on these principles both consciously and unconsciously, and different principles were given different weight depending on the particular context or language used.

Although the study identified variations in what specific words and language people considered generally acceptable, it also found that the principles which participants used to judge what is generally acceptable were broadly consistent across the sample.

1.3.2 Principles guiding opinion on all potentially offensive language

The research study identified some principles which participants from both the general UK sample and minority groups used when deciding whether language was offensive or not. These were:

Which words were used and how frequently

Participants considered:

- How offensive were the words perceived to be?
- How frequently were they used?

Amongst the words explored in this research (see Appendices 15 and 16 for details), participants thought that some words were considerably stronger than others. The mildest words were considered acceptable in most situations (e.g. 'arse', 'damn', 'tits'), whereas considerable care was seen to be necessary over the use of stronger words.

In terms of strong language, most participants found the words 'cunt', 'fuck', 'motherfucker', 'pussy', 'cock' and 'twat' unacceptable pre-watershed and also wanted care to be taken over the use of the words 'bitch', 'bastard', 'bugger', 'dick', 'wanker', 'shag', 'slag' and 'shit'. Post-watershed, 'cunt' and 'motherfucker' were considered the least acceptable words discussed in the research. There were mixed views on the use of the word 'fuck' which was considered more acceptable by some participants (e.g. younger people and male participants) but less acceptable by others (e.g. participants aged 55-75). Most participants also wanted some care to be taken over the use of the word 'pussy' post-watershed. The other words listed were seen to be acceptable post-watershed by most participants.

In terms of discriminatory language, 'nigger' and 'Paki' were seen as the most offensive words. Some participants thought it was acceptable to use them in some specific contexts (e.g. for educational use), whereas some thought they should not be used on television or radio in any context. The word 'spastic' was also generally considered unacceptable. Some discriminatory language polarised responses, particularly 'retarded', 'gyppo', 'pikey', 'gay' and 'cripple' as participants' familiarity with and interpretation of, these words varied greatly, both within the general UK sample, and between the general UK sample and the minority groups.

Overall, most potentially offensive words were not seen to be unacceptable in principle, as context was a key factor in determining whether language was seen as generally acceptable or unacceptable. The exception to this was some potentially discriminatory language (particularly 'Paki', 'nigger' and 'spastic') which some participants considered unacceptable in any context.

Some participants considered offensive language to be unacceptable when used too frequently, even if its use was thought to be broadly acceptable in relation to all of the other principles outlined in this report.

Whether children were likely to be watching / listening and the potential impact upon them

Participants considered:

- Were children⁶ likely to be watching/listening, and who were they likely to be watching or listening with?
- What was the likely impact of the words on any children who were watching or listening?

Strong language was much less acceptable for almost all participants during daytime programmes, if younger children⁷ were likely to be watching alone, or if a show was directly targeted at children. If children were likely to be watching with parents⁸, for example in the early evening, there were still limits on what language should be used but also a view that parents had some level of responsibility for choosing what their children watch, even pre-watershed.

⁶ Throughout the report, the term 'children' refers to people aged under 16.

⁷ Throughout the report, the term 'younger children' refers to children aged around 10 and under.

⁸ Throughout the report, references to parents also apply to carers or other responsible adults.

When considering individual examples, participants also thought about whether the words used were already known and used by children, and whether or not their inclusion in the programme would have encouraged children to use them.

Whether the audience had made an informed choice to watch / listen

Participants considered:

- Did the language fit with the audience's expectations?
- Was the programme/presenter/character well known?
- If the programme/presenter/character was not well known, did the language fit with the audience's expectations based on channel, programme type and/or time it was broadcast?
- Was the programme on television or radio?
- Was it a programme or a trailer?
- Was a warning given before broadcast?

Most participants thought that, provided the broadcaster had acted responsibly and complied with the other principles identified by the research and set out in this section, it should be for the individual or parent to decide whether or not to avoid programmes containing potentially offensive language. Consequently, when assessing the levels of acceptability within a programme, they took into account the information that would be available to viewers and listeners when deciding whether or not to watch or listen to the programme.

Potentially offensive language was more acceptable if it fitted with audience expectations because those who were likely to find the content offensive were less likely to choose to watch the programme. Expectations were either based on knowledge of the programme, presenter or character, or inferred from the channel, programme type and time of broadcast. Most also thought that potentially offensive language was more acceptable if a pre-transmission warning was broadcast.

Participants' views were divided on the impact of medium on the acceptability of potentially offensive language. Some thought that potentially offensive language was more acceptable on the radio because listeners make more of an active choice to tune in, but some participants disagreed, saying that people could just as easily hear strong language when flicking through channels on the radio as on television.

Potentially offensive language was also seen to be less acceptable in trailers because the audience has not made an active choice to watch a trailer.

The intent with which the words were used

Participants considered:

- Were the words aimed at individuals?
- Were they used aggressively?
- Were they used to make fun of people?
- Were they a legitimate part of the story line or gratuitous?
- Were they being used for educational purposes/to make a moral point?
- Did they reflect how the words are used in everyday life?

Most participants considered that potentially offensive language was less acceptable when it was used aggressively, targeted towards an individual, or used to mock an individual or group. However, potentially offensive language used as playful banter was more acceptable.

Some participants also found potentially offensive language more acceptable if it was critical to the storyline than if it was seen as gratuitous. If the use of potentially offensive language was seen as reflecting reality (either in a reality show, or within a

drama or comedy), it was more acceptable to some. However, some participants did not see this as adequate justification.

The issue of intent was a particularly important consideration for participants when discussing potentially discriminatory language. In particular, potentially discriminatory language was seen as more acceptable if it was critical to the storyline, particularly if the intention was to educate the audience and/or demonstrate the negative impact of using this language. However, some participants held the view that some potentially discriminatory language should not be used in any context.

Whether the broadcaster acted responsibly

Participants considered:

- Was it reasonable to have expected the broadcaster to control the language used, edited or bleeped it?
- Did it set a bad example/encourage use of the word?
- Who used the language (e.g. paid presenter or guest or public figure or member of the public) and to what extent was the broadcaster responsible?
- Was it said by accident or design?
- Was it used for gain / to boost ratings?

Participants recognised that there are some circumstances where it is difficult for broadcasters to prevent the use of potentially offensive language, such as live programmes. However, in the event that offensive language is used in these circumstances, they expected to see quick action from the broadcaster to prevent further incidents and an apology. They also considered who used the potentially offensive language when assessing broadcaster responsibility. Many felt that broadcasters have more responsibility to prevent the use of potentially offensive language by paid presenters or public figures than members of the public, although

there were a few who disagreed, saying that broadcasters should be equally responsible for all content, whoever is involved.

Participants also considered whether the broadcaster could have edited or bleeped the language, although some had concerns about excessive use of bleeping as they believed that it drew more attention to the language itself. Participants also wanted broadcasters to consider whether the use of potentially offensive language encouraged its use or presented it as acceptable.

Potentially offensive language was also considered more acceptable if used by accident rather than design, and less acceptable if participants believed that the broadcaster was specifically intending to boost ratings or media coverage through the use of potentially offensive language on television or radio.

1.3.3 Principles guiding opinion on discriminatory language only

All of the above principles applied when participants discussed potentially offensive discriminatory language, particularly which word was used and the intent with which it was used. Participants also raised some additional considerations, as follows:

Familiarity and perceptions of social acceptability

Participants considered:

- How familiar was the word and was it seen as socially acceptable/unacceptable?
- What was the potential impact of the language on the group it was aimed at?

Most participants from the general UK sample took into account their understanding of society's views on certain words. Some words were seen as socially taboo, such as 'nigger' and 'Paki'. For some participants, this meant that they thought taboo words should not be used on television and radio, whereas some participants believed that there were some contexts in which socially unacceptable words could be acceptable on television or radio, e.g. for educational purposes, drama, or comedy. Both of these

points of view were expressed by participants in the general UK sample and the minority groups.

Some participants from the general UK sample assumed that words they were unfamiliar with (e.g. 'towelhead'⁹, 'Yid'¹⁰) were more acceptable than other, familiar discriminatory words (e.g. 'nigger', 'Paki'). This was also true for some participants from minority audiences, although their level of familiarity with some words was different from the general UK sample. However, some participants from both the general UK sample and minority audiences felt that, in principle, all potentially discriminatory language should be treated in the same way, regardless of how familiar or well known it is. This view was also expressed by participants from minority groups when discussing words which could be seen as aimed at them as individuals.

Some participants in the general UK sample also took into account the size of the group who might be offended when assessing acceptability, and how they felt about the group in question i.e. whether they were sympathetic towards them. However, some participants thought that the same considerations should be applied to all potentially discriminatory language, regardless of the size or personal views on the group. Level of familiarity and group size were not considerations for participants from minority groups when discussing words which could be seen as aimed at them as individuals.

Some participants from the general UK sample also took into account what they thought the people the words were aimed at would think about it. The views they reached as a result of this consideration depended on their level of familiarity with the

⁹ 'Towelhead' - "a person who wears a head-cloth or turban" (slang, offensive) [Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, sixth edition, 2007]

¹⁰ 'Yid' - "A Jew" (slang, chiefly derogatory and offensive) [Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, sixth edition, 2007]

particular group. Where they were unfamiliar with what the group in question thought of the word, they found it difficult to assess how acceptable it was. However, this was not raised by participants from minority groups when discussing clips that used words which could be seen as aimed at them as individuals, since they responded based on their personal views on the language used.

Who the words were directed towards

Within this, participants considered:

- Was the programme balanced, and was there an opportunity for the group being targeted to respond?

Many participants thought that potentially discriminatory language was less acceptable if it was aimed at individuals or groups outside the programme. Similarly, participants were also more likely to find potentially discriminatory language unacceptable if they saw it as unbalanced or if there was no opportunity for the group in question to respond. These views were expressed by both the general UK sample and the minority audiences.

How words could be interpreted / how they were used

Within this, participants considered:

- Did the word have other or broader meanings?

Words and phrases which are only or mainly used to refer to a particular group were considered generally less acceptable by both participants from the general UK sample and minority groups. This was also the case when words which can be interpreted in more than one way were used in such a way as to make it clear that they are referring to a minority group (e.g. within one of the clips shown to participants the word 'pikey' was used by a presenter to refer to people mending tarmac, a type of work he implied was associated with Irish people or travellers). Participants from the minority audiences

shared these views when discussing clips with potentially discriminatory language which could be seen to be aimed at them.

Where discriminatory words have an additional meaning which is negative but not directly discriminatory, some participants from the general UK sample found it acceptable, provided it was used in its non-discriminatory sense (e.g. 'pikey' used to mean 'cheap' rather than directly referring to travellers). This view was also expressed by some participants from some of the minority audiences when discussing clips that contained potentially discriminatory language which could be seen to be aimed at them. However, some participants disliked the use of words which could be seen to be aimed at them or their family members in any context, whether explicitly directed at someone likely to find it offensive or not.

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The research will therefore contribute to the contextual factors Ofcom takes into consideration when investigating complaints made by members of the public.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background and objectives

2.1.1 The Broadcasting Code

Under the Communications Act 2003, Ofcom has a duty to draw up and, from time to time, revise a code for standards in television and radio services. This is known as the Broadcasting Code ('the Code') and came into effect in July 2005 (See Appendix 3 for more details on the code and its related terms.) This was the result of extensive public consultation and research during 2004.

2.1.2 How the Code works in relation to offensive language

The Code requires all television and radio broadcasters licensed by Ofcom, as well as the BBC, to apply generally accepted standards to the content of radio and television

services to ensure viewers and listeners are protected from harmful or offensive material.

Where offensive language is used in broadcast material, broadcasters are required to apply adequate context to justify its inclusion. Context might include ensuring that the material is appropriately scheduled, or editorially justified, sufficiently signposted and unlikely to exceed the audience expectation of viewers or listeners to the programme or channel.

2.1.3 How Ofcom regulates offensive language

The specific rules in the Code that concern offensive language are found in Section One (Protecting the Under Eighteens) and Section Two (Harm and Offence).

The protection of young people under eighteen is one of the key principles upon which the Code is based. It is a responsibility Ofcom shares with parents¹¹, as well as broadcasters. Section One states in relation to offensive language and protection of under eighteens:

Rule 1.14 The most offensive language must not be broadcast before the watershed (in the case of television) or when children are particularly likely to be listening (in the case of radio).

Rule 1.15 Offensive language must not be used in programmes made for younger children except in the most exceptional circumstances.

Rule 1.16 Offensive language must not be broadcast before the watershed (in the case of television), or when children are particularly likely to be listening (in the case of radio), unless it is justified by the context. In any event, frequent use of such language

¹¹ Throughout the report, references to parents also apply to carers or other responsible adults.

must be avoided before the watershed. (Regarding Rules 1.14 to 1.16 see Rule 2.3 in Section Two: Harm and Offence.)

Section Two of the Code requires broadcasters to apply generally accepted standards to the content of television and radio services so as to provide adequate protection to members of the public from material which may include offensive language. Section Two states:

Rule 2.3 In applying generally accepted standards broadcasters must ensure that material which may cause offence is justified by the context (see meaning of "context" below). Such material may include, but is not limited to, offensive language, violence, sex, sexual violence, humiliation, distress, violation of human dignity, discriminatory treatment or language (for example on the grounds of age, disability, gender, race, religion, beliefs and sexual orientation). Appropriate information should also be broadcast where it would assist in avoiding or minimising offence.

The meaning of "context" is described as follows:

‘Context includes (but is not limited to):

- the editorial content of the programme, programmes or series;
- the service on which the material is broadcast;
- the time of broadcast;
- what other programmes are scheduled before and after the programme or programmes concerned;
- the degree of harm or offence likely to be caused by the inclusion of any particular sort of material in programmes generally or programmes of a particular description;
- the likely size and composition of the potential audience and likely expectation of the audience;

- the extent to which the nature of the content can be brought to the attention of the potential audience for example by giving information; and
- the effect of the material on viewers or listeners who may come across it unawares.’

When Ofcom receives a complaint relating to offensive language, it applies the appropriate rules within the Code taking into account the time of broadcast (pre or post-watershed) and considers the context in which the language is used and whether this provides adequate justification for its use. To inform Ofcom of generally accepted standards, Ofcom consults consumer research for an understanding of the general public’s views on offensive language. Where material is investigated by Ofcom and found to be in breach of the Code the decision is published in the Broadcast Bulletin on Ofcom’s website (www.ofcom.org.uk). In addition, where a broadcaster has seriously and/or repeatedly breached the Code by inappropriately transmitting offensive language, Ofcom has imposed a statutory sanction. An example of this is Ofcom’s sanction against *The Russell Brand Show* which contained offensive material, published 3 April 2009.

2.1.4 The role for consumer research

Ofcom recognises that the nature and use of language, and the degree of offence that it may cause, changes over time and therefore an up to date understanding of public attitudes towards offensive language should be underpinned by regular consumer research.

Ofcom therefore commissioned this programme of qualitative research to build up their existing knowledge around public attitudes in this area¹². The research was designed to

¹² Ofcom previously undertook consumer research into the general public’s views on offensive language in 2005. This research was commissioned to provide an up to date picture of the public’s views on offensive language on TV and radio. For more details on *Language and*

provide evidence on current levels of tolerance and offence, how perceptions differ by context, and how this varies by different demographic groups within the population, including some minority audiences, where some potentially offensive words might be seen as linked to or aimed at a particular group.

2.1.5 Research objectives

The research amongst a cross section of the UK population was designed to uncover their opinions on potentially offensive language on television or radio. The overarching objectives for this element of the research were:

- To establish a barometer of potentially offensive terms and an understanding of generally accepted standards in relation to potentially offensive words and phrases within a range of contexts on television and radio; and
- To understand how viewers and listeners decide what is considered generally acceptable/unacceptable in terms of potentially offensive language on television and radio.

In detail, the primary objectives were:

- To gain an overall understanding of generally accepted standards regarding offensive language on television and radio by:
 - Establishing viewers' and listeners' expectations of the use of a range of offensive words/phrases within the context of television/radio content, including how expectations and opinions differ by:
 - Transmission time;
 - Type of content, television, radio, programme type, channel;
 - Provision of warnings pre-transmission; and

Sexual Imagery in Broadcasting: A Contextual Investigation, see www.ofcom.org.uk/research/radio/reports/bcr/language.pdf

- Intent/purpose of inclusion of words/phrases.
- Investigating both personal and citizen perspectives.
- To understand how reactions/levels of offence to language on television/radio differ by audience profile such as age, gender, socio-economic groups and lifestage/parental status.

There were two secondary objectives, which were:

- To provide further insights on acceptable/unacceptable language before, around and after the 9pm television watershed; and
- To identify any concerns and views about offensive language on television and radio.

As well as undertaking qualitative research with a general UK sample including people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, the research also included specific discussions with other minority audiences¹³ including gay, lesbian and bisexual people, transgender people, travellers and disabled people and family members of disabled people, to explore further some potentially offensive words that can be seen as linked to or aimed at particular groups. The specific objectives for this aspect of the research were:

- To gain an overall understanding of generally accepted standards regarding the use of offensive language on television and radio; and
- To understand the views of a sample of people from specific minority groups on the use of discriminatory language relating to these groups on television and radio.

¹³ For more detail on the samples, see sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3

2.2 Methodology

The programme of research involved a series of group discussions and in-depth interviews, with an extensive pre-task (i.e. a task which participants completed before attending the group discussion or interview). The rationale for the methodology, approach and sample structure is discussed in detail below.

2.2.1 Rationale for the methodology

The key issues which informed our approach to conducting qualitative research with the general UK sample were:

- Conducting some discussion groups with participants who were demographically homogenous in terms of gender, age, lifestage and socio-demographic group, as they are more conducive to open and frank discussion of potentially sensitive issues than larger workshops or demographically mixed sessions;
- Conducting some discussion groups where half of the participants were from black and minority ethnic communities (BME) to ensure that they felt comfortable expressing their views on potentially racist language;
- Using an in-depth pre-task completed at home to enable participants to view long clips. This was in order to set each example of the use of potentially offensive language in context, gather private/personal view points and minimise the risk of false consensus emerging in the groups;
- Reviewing the pre-tasks ahead of the groups to enable the moderator to prompt on views which participants might be unwilling to spontaneously raise in a group setting but had mentioned in their pre-task; and
- Conducting a programme of in-depth interviews to act as a check on the group response.

For the research with gay, lesbian and bisexual, transgender, traveller and disability audiences, the primary factors which informed our approach were:

- Conducting specific groups with these audiences in order to provide an environment in which participants felt able to openly express their views which might not have been achieved in the general UK sample group discussions;
- Conducting small group discussions where appropriate to incorporate an element of group discussion in order to fully explore the issues around acceptable language on television and radio;
- Running groups where the main focus was feedback on the words and clips related to discriminatory language to explore this fully, rather than investigating the full array of the potentially offensive language and clips used in the general UK research¹⁴; and
- Conducting in-depth interviews where group discussions were not appropriate e.g. where there is significant diversity within a minority group (e.g. different disabilities) or the number of people in the population is relatively small (e.g. female to male transgender people).

2.2.2 Sample structure: Cross section of the UK public

It was clear from previous research conducted by Ofcom that demographic factors have a strong influence on views about potentially offensive language on television and radio. The sample was therefore segmented by three key demographic variables:

- Gender;
- Age and lifestage; and
- Socio-economic group.

An inclusive approach to the sampling for this element of the research was required as it was not appropriate to exclude any participants from the general UK sample. In recruiting participants from BME communities, in order to encourage an open

¹⁴ Therefore findings and quotes taken from the minority audiences groups and depths are largely reported within sections 3.3 and 4.2, rather than throughout the rest of the report.

expression of views and prevent marginalisation, at least half the participants in four of the ten discussion groups were from BME communities¹⁵. The other groups were recruited as white only groups. Six of the ten in-depth interviews were conducted with people from BME communities, in order to act as a check on the group response and provide specific feedback on words which might be considered offensive to people in BME communities. Please note that where quote attributions identify the ethnicity as 'white and BME', this is referring to a quote from a participant in one of the groups which included white and BME participants.

All groups were recruited to include a spread of:

- Socio-economic group;
- Working status;
- General social attitudes from liberal to conservative; and
- Television platform, with at least one participant per group with terrestrial television only, at least three per group with Freeview, and at least three per group with cable or Sky.

In addition, four of the groups involved participants from rural areas.

The final sample structure is shown in the table below:

	Male	Female
No children, aged 18-30 (at least 3 per group under 20)	Group discussion, ABC1, white, Glasgow* Depth interview, ABC1,	Group discussion, C2DE, white and BME, Birmingham**

¹⁵ The sample structure was designed to include areas across the UK where it was possible to ensure participation from people within the two largest BME subgroups; Asian and Afro-Caribbean people. Within the scope of this piece of research it was not possible to ensure that participants from every BME community were included.

	Afro-Caribbean, Belfast	Depth interview, C2DE, white, Glasgow
Younger children, aged 20-45	Group discussion, C2DE, white and BME, London** Depth interview, C2DE, white, Glasgow	Group discussion, ABC1, white, Cardiff* Depth interview, ABC1, Asian, Birmingham
No children, aged 30-55	Group discussion, ABC1, white and BME, Birmingham** Depth interview, ABC1, white, Cardiff	Group discussion, C2DE, white, Belfast Depth interview, C2DE, Asian, Slough
Older children, aged 30-55	Group discussion, C2DE, white, Cardiff* Depth interview, C2DE, Afro-Caribbean, London	Group discussion, ABC1, white and BME, Slough** Depth interview, ABC1, white, Belfast
No children/empty nesters, aged 55-75 (at least 4 per group between 65 and 75)	Group discussion, ABC1, white, Belfast Depth interview, ABC1, Asian, Birmingham	Group discussion, C2DE, white, Glasgow* Depth interview, C2DE, Afro-Caribbean, Cardiff

*At least three participants from the ten participants recruited were from rural areas near to Glasgow/Cardiff.

**At least four participants per group of eight were from BME communities (both Asian and Afro-Caribbean participants in each group).

All groups lasted for three hours and involved between eight and ten participants (ten were recruited for each group). All depth interviews within the UK general sample lasted for 1.5 hours and involved one participant. In total, the general UK sample included 94 participants.

Given the relatively large sample size, an indication of the weighting of participants' views is given where appropriate in the report. The term 'many' is used when the view was expressed frequently within and across the group discussions and depth interviews. The term 'some' is used when the view was expressed occasionally but across a number of group discussions and depth interviews, and the term 'few' is used when the view was expressed by a small number of participants only.

2.2.3 Sample structure: Gay, lesbian and bisexual, transgender, traveller and disability audiences

Ofcom wished to hear the views of a range of audiences to ensure that a wide range of perspectives on the use of potentially offensive language on television and radio were included in the research. The selection of audiences for this strand of the project was informed by recent complaints to Ofcom relating to potentially offensive language broadcast on television and radio which referred to particular groups. The minority audiences included in the research were:

- Lesbian, gay and bisexual people;
- Transgender people;
- Travellers; and
- Disabled people, including family members of disabled people.

N.B. Participants from BME groups were specifically included within the general UK sample groups and in-depth interviews. Gay, lesbian and bisexual people, transgender people, travellers and disabled people or family members of disabled people may also have been included naturally within the general UK sample.

The methodology for the research specifically designed with each audience was as follows:

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people

Two single gender group discussions (gay/bisexual men and lesbian/bisexual women) were conducted.

Transgender people

One group discussion with male to female transgender people and one in-depth interview with a female to male transgender person were conducted. Given the relatively small number of female to male transgender people in the UK,, an in-depth interview approach was more appropriate.

Travellers

Two single gender group discussions were conducted.

Disabled people, including family members of disabled people

Six in-depth interviews were conducted in total. Given the need to include people with different types of disability, an in-depth approach was more appropriate than group discussions. The interviews focused on three disability types, reflecting the words that Ofcom have received complaints about:

- Mental health conditions;
- Learning disabilities; and
- Mobility difficulties.

Three interviews were conducted with disabled people (covering the three disability types) and three with family members of disabled people (covering the three disability types, focusing on parents). Family members of disabled people were included to represent disabled people who would not have been able to participate in the research process. Within this sample, we included one interview with a family member of a

person with Down's Syndrome, because this was relevant to particular terms under research.

The final sample structure is shown in the table below:

	Group number/profile
Lesbian/gay/ bisexual people	Group discussion, male, London Group discussion, female, Manchester
Transgender people	Group discussion, male to female transgender, Manchester Depth interview, female to male transgender, Manchester
Travellers	Group discussion, male, London Group discussion, female, Manchester
Disabled people and carers	Depth interview, person with a mental health condition, London Depth interview, person with mobility difficulties, Manchester Depth interview, person with a learning disability, London Depth interview, family member of person with a severe mental health condition, London Depth interview, family member of person with mobility difficulties, London Depth interview, family member of person with a severe learning disability, London

All groups lasted for two hours and involved up to six participants. All depth interviews lasted for 1.5 hours and involved one participant, apart from one which was a paired depth with a person with autism and her carer. In total, the minority audiences sample included 35 participants.

Please note that the findings from the research with these audiences are indicative rather than conclusive, given the relatively small sample sizes.

2.2.4 The pre-task, stimulus material and discussion flow

To ensure that the discussion focused on the use of potentially offensive language on television and radio (rather than views on such language in society more generally), an extensive pre-task was given to participants ahead of the group discussion or interview. Each participant received three DVDs, with a set of clips divided into television clips broadcast pre-watershed, television clips broadcast post-watershed and radio clips.

To enable participants to reflect on the context for the use of the potentially offensive language in each clip, relatively long clips were shown (where possible). The clip length varied between two minutes and 25 minutes. Participants were also provided with information about the channel and time of broadcast, whether a pre-transmission warning was given and some brief background information about the programme. The pre-task forms sent to participants are included in Appendices 7 to 10 of this report.

Participants were only invited to take part in the group discussions if they had completed their pre-tasks. Pre-tasks were also sent to moderators ahead of the group discussions for review, which enabled the moderator to probe effectively and bring in the whole range of views within the group.

The groups and interviews followed the agenda outlined below:

- Participant introductions and warm up:
 - Moderators gave an extensive introduction to the research to cover the background and purpose, nature of the questions and language which would be used during the discussions.
- Discussion about the clips:
 - The order in which the clips were shown was rotated across the groups to minimise order bias in the response.

- After piloting, the clips were grouped into types (e.g. family viewing, post-watershed strong language) to enable discussion of broader themes and issues and ensure a smooth flow of discussion.
 - Before discussion of each clip, a short reminder clip was played, focusing on the section of the programme containing the potentially offensive language. Moderators also reminded participants about the time and channel of broadcast and whether a warning was given.
 - During discussion of the clips, moderators asked participants to express their personal views on each clip initially, and then discuss whether they thought the clip was generally acceptable, thinking about the public generally.
 - At the end of the discussion of each clip, participants were asked to rate the use of language in the clip on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is totally unacceptable and 10 is totally acceptable, thinking first about its acceptability on television or radio from their personal perspective, and then for the public generally. This information was used to clarify participants' overall views on the clips and inform analysis, rather than as stand-alone data. Therefore this data has not been directly reported in this research report.
- Word sort exercise to review the full list of potentially offensive words that Ofcom wanted to explore (for more detail, see the lists of words in Appendices 15 and 16):
 - Participants were asked to order the words on a scale from 'not generally acceptable' to 'generally acceptable', first thinking about television programmes before 9pm, then thinking about programmes after 9pm.

The full discussion guides used are included in Appendices 11 to 14 of this report. The lists of words used in the word sort exercise are also included in Appendices 15 and 16.

2.2.5 Selection of offensive language and clips used in the research

In selecting the potentially offensive language used in this research Ofcom referred to the previous research on offensive language published in 2005¹⁶. Ofcom updated this list to take into account complaints received about offensive language from viewers and listeners since 2005. This approach sought to ensure a due regard to changes in attitudes towards potentially offensive language since the last published research.

Ofcom then used this list to inform the choice of clips of potentially offensive terms which was shown to participants. The clips were representative of material broadcast on television and radio, pre-watershed and post-watershed across a range of channels and types of programming. They included material that Ofcom had, and had not, found in breach of the broadcasting rules.

2.2.6 Descriptions of the clips used in the research

The research used a selection of clips as stimulus for discussion about offensive language on television and radio. As described above, they were selected to include a range of channels, programme types and language used. The aim of the research was not to report on individual clips, but to look at the responses across the clips to identify key themes or principles, and commonalities or differences across the sample.

The following clips were discussed in the groups and depths with a cross section of the UK population.

¹⁶ For more details on *Language and Sexual Imagery in Broadcasting: A Contextual Investigation*, see www.ofcom.org.uk/research/radio/reports/bcr/language.pdf



synovate

Research reinvented

Pre-watershed	Programme details
Clip 1 'Family-orientated television talent show'	Clip 1 is taken from a family entertainment programme aimed at a wide range of viewers – the series invites members of the public to compete in a singing contest to win a recording contract as a pop artist. This clip features an audition for the competition in which an older, conservatively dressed woman unexpectedly sings “ <i>We’re having a gang bang</i> ” to the surprise of the judges. The programme was broadcast at 7.30pm on a Saturday on ITV1.
Clip 2 'Trailer for a fashion reality television programme'	Clip 2 is a promotional trailer for an American reality programme in which participants compete for a job at a leading fashion magazine. The programme is aimed at young people. The on-screen graphic reads “ <i>Bitchy is the new black</i> ” and one contestant is shown saying of another “ <i>she’s such a f---ing bitch</i> ” with the expletive partially bleeped. This trailer was broadcast at 4pm on a Sunday on Five.
Clip 3 'Teenage-orientated television soap'	Clip 3 is from a soap opera aimed at a teenage and young adult audience. The characters are generally in their late teens or early twenties and the storylines often tackle difficult issues, for example drug addiction, homelessness, racism, and rape. In this scene a young white man, (a known and disliked bully), accosts a young Asian woman (known to be struggling with her identity) and robs her. During the incident he calls her a “ <i>little Paki</i> ”. The programme was broadcast at 6.30pm on a Monday on Channel 4.



synovate

Research reinvented

<p>Clip 4 'Comedy cartoon'</p>	<p>Clip 4 is taken from a long running American cartoon sitcom featuring a family, their friends and neighbours. It is designed to appeal to a wide range of viewers. In this clip the mother of the family has been bought a landscaped garden by her husband and thinks aloud "<i>How much did he piss away on this?</i>". The programme was broadcast at 5.30pm on a Sunday on Sky One.</p>
<p>Clip 5 'Live television sports coverage'</p>	<p>Clip 5 is taken from live motor racing sports coverage. The commentator is shown catching interviews before the race starts and investigating the reasons for a delay. During an interview the commentator refers to "<i>pikeys out there putting some new tarmac down</i>" as a possible reason for the delay to the race. The programme was broadcast at 5.05pm on a Sunday on ITV1.</p>
<p>Clip 6 'Television entertainment series on cars'</p>	<p>Clip 6 is a long running entertainment series about cars. It is often lighthearted and contains banter between the three presenters, tending to appeal to men, but also to children. In this montage of clips: a pie and a key were shown on a car bonnet as a reference to 'pikey' (i.e. meaning 'pie' and 'key' and therefore 'pikey'); a reference was made to "<i>a 'steak and kidney' 'lock opener'</i>"; and a further reference was made to "<i>anyone whose business is selling pegs and heather</i>". The programme was broadcast at 8pm on a Sunday on BBC Two.</p>

<p>Clip 7 'Television entertainment series on cars'</p>	<p>Clip 7 is a long running entertainment series about cars (see also Clip 6 above). It is often lighthearted and contains banter between the three presenters, tending to appeal to men, but also to children. In this clip the presenter describes a car as <i>"It's gay. A bit ginger beer"</i>. The programme was broadcast at 8pm on a Sunday on BBC Two.</p>
<p>Clip 8 'Pre-watershed television soap'</p>	<p>Clip 8 is from a long running soap opera watched by a broad range of people. This particular clip features a heated argument between some of the well known female characters who live on the street. During the argument the words 'bitch', 'cow' and 'slut' are repeatedly used. The programme was broadcast at 7.30pm on a Sunday on ITV1.</p>
<p>Post-watershed</p>	<p>Programme details</p>
<p>Clip 9 'Television house-mate reality programme'</p>	<p>Clip 9 is taken from a reality programme in which 'housemates' live together in a specially designed house where they are recorded by cameras and microphones at all times and they are not allowed any contact with the outside world. The housemates compete to win a cash prize by avoiding evictions from the house. In this clip a white woman and two black women are seen chatting. After a comment from one of the black housemates about feeling pregnant, the white woman comments, in what appears to be a light-hearted way <i>"Are you pushing it out, you nigger"</i> and is challenged in a discussion which follows. The programme was broadcast at 10pm on a Wednesday on Channel 4.</p>

<p>Clip 10 'Television celebrity chef reality programme'</p>	<p>Clip 10 is from a reality series in which a celebrity chef visits, and attempts to turn around, failing restaurants. In this clip he is shown confronting the owner of one restaurant and delivering his unvarnished opinion of the owner's approach to the business. The restaurant chef is also shown angrily berating his boss. The words 'fuck' and 'fucking' are used repeatedly and aggressively throughout. The programme was broadcast at 9pm on a Friday on Channel 4.</p>
<p>Clip 11 'Adult-orientated television sitcom'</p>	<p>Clip 11 is taken from a comedy series set in a talent agency. In this clip two members of the agency are meeting a prospective client. During the meeting both members of the agency repeatedly use the words 'fuck' and 'cunt'. This programme was broadcast at 10pm on a Friday on Channel 4.</p>
<p>Clip 12 'Adult satirical television comedy'</p>	<p>Clip 12 is a satirical comedy drama set in a television production office run by an egotistical and maverick television producer. This episode shows the producer working under pressure to make a hit programme after the failure of his last show. The programme features a transsexual character called Georgina who is hired by Jonathan for her track record in writing successful television drama. This results in anger from the in-house team who feel sidelined and go on strike. During the episode Georgina experiences bigoted treatment from the characters, including Jonathan and some of his production team. References include "<i>a cock in a frock</i>" and "<i>trannies</i>". The producer's crass and prejudiced character is the butt of the episode's humour. This programme was broadcast at 9pm on a Friday on ITV1.</p>

Clip 13 'Television adult comedy pop quiz'	Clip 13 was taken from a comedy pop quiz television show, which features guest competitors from music, television and comedy. In this clip one celebrity competitor unexpectedly gives the correct answer and her team mate comments " <i>You thought Gaby was retarded, but she's not</i> ". The programme was broadcast at 9.30pm on a Thursday on BBC2.
Radio	Programme details
Clip 14 'Radio daily magazine programme'	Clip 14 was taken from a daily magazine programme on a radio station is aimed at 25 to 44-year-olds. The main focus of the programme is music, but sometimes features guests from other types of entertainment. In this clip an American stand-up comedian is interviewed and refers to former American vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin. He comments that Sarah Palin " <i>is a 44 year-old mother of five, two of which are retarded</i> " and " <i>One's got Down's Syndrome and the other volunteered for Iraq, so that's two retards out of five</i> " and " <i>The woman has a baby with Down's Syndrome; how can America get behind her when even God obviously hates her</i> ". The programme was broadcast at 1pm on a Friday on BBC6 Music.
Clip 15 'Radio interview with John Lennon'	Clip 15 was a radio documentary featuring lengthy extracts from a full and frank 1970 interview with John Lennon. During the interview he used the words 'fuck' and 'bastard'. The programme was broadcast at 9am on a Friday on BBC Radio 4.
Clip 16 'Radio pop song'	Clip 16 was taken from a pop song broadcast on a London based radio station which features hip hop, R&B, urban, and dance music. The lyrics " <i>If you seek Amy</i> " sound like 'F.U.C.K. me'. The programme was broadcast at 2pm on a Monday on Kiss 100.

For the research with gay, lesbian and bisexual, transgender, traveller and disability audiences, three additional clips were included in order to explore issues relating to specific words in more detail.

Additional clips	Programme details
Clip 17 'Adult orientated sixth form comedy series'	Comedy about four boys and their experiences through sixth-form education. In this clip one character mocks another by saying " <i>Have you got Down's Syndrome or something?</i> ". The programme was broadcast at 10.35pm on a Thursday on E4.
Clip 18 'Family orientated American sitcom'	Clip 18 was taken from an American sitcom about a modern-day dad and his life with his family. In this clip a child is shown joking with the dad character by saying " <i>your shoes are gay</i> " to which the dad character replies " <i>yeah and your hairdo is gayer</i> ". The child finally replies " <i>yeah, well that hat is really, really gay</i> ". The programme was broadcast at 5.30pm on a Tuesday on Virgin 1.
Clip 19 'Chart-style review programme'	Clip 19 was taken from an irreverent end-of-year review programme presented in the style of a "chart" countdown. It featured Brazilian football player Ronaldo who had been reported in the media as being discovered in a hotel room with three transvestite prostitutes. During the clip the voice over referred to " <i>chicks with dicks</i> ", " <i>trannies</i> " and " <i>fellas in frocks</i> ". The programme was broadcast at 9.35pm on a Saturday on BBC3.

3. Main findings: Key principles which drive the acceptability of potentially offensive language on television and radio

3.1 Introduction to the key principles

This research was designed to better understand audiences' views on potentially offensive language on television and radio. A selection of clips containing potentially offensive language was chosen and used to stimulate discussion. Participants' responses to the potentially offensive language varied depending on the context of each of the clips. Participants' views on individual clips were also influenced by their age, gender and personal experiences.

The study has identified common themes within the contextual factors that participants considered when judging the acceptability of potentially offensive language. These themes are referred to as 'principles' throughout this report. Participants drew on these principles both consciously and unconsciously, and different principles were given different weight depending on the particular context or language used.

Although there were some variations in what participants considered both personally and generally acceptable, which are discussed further below, the principles which participants used to judge what is generally acceptable were consistent across the sample.

The principles which applied to all potentially offensive language were:

- Which words were used and how frequently;
- Whether children were likely to be watching / listening and the potential impact upon them;
- Whether the audience had made an informed choice to watch / listen;

- The intent with which the words were used; and
- Whether the broadcaster acted responsibly.

While all of the above principles applied when participants were discussing potentially offensive discriminatory language, participants also raised some additional considerations, as follows:

- Familiarity and social acceptability;
- Who the words were directed towards; and
- How words can be interpreted / how they were used.

When assessing individual clips, participants considered different combinations of principles depending on the specific language used, the context and their individual perspectives and experience. Each individual clip and the context in which the language was used affected which principles were considered and the relative importance of each.

The principles are illustrated with specific examples of participants discussing individual television and radio clips and what led them to conclude if language was offensive or acceptable. Each example given refers only to the acceptability of the language in the context of the individual clip and should not be taken as the participants' overall opinion of the word itself. Participants' opinions on potentially offensive words and phrases are discussed in more depth in Section 4.

More than one principle can apply to each clip, therefore clips may be referred to a number of times throughout this section. See Appendix 1 for the overall balance and range of participants' opinions on the individual clips.

An indication of the weighting of participants' views is given where appropriate in the report. The term 'many' is used when the view was expressed frequently within and

across the group discussions and depth interviews. The term 'some' is used when the view was expressed occasionally but across a number of group discussions and depth interviews, and the term 'few' is used when the view was expressed by a small number of participants only.

The next section outlines findings on the differences between personal views and opinions on generally accepted standards. Then detail is given on each of the principles that underpin whether language was seen as acceptable or not acceptable by participants.

3.1.1 Personal views and generally accepted standards

In both the general UK sample and minority group discussions, participants were asked to consider how personally acceptable they found the language in each clip, before assessing it in terms of general acceptability. In order to assess personal acceptability, moderators focused on questions around the individual participant's personal response and whether they found the language offensive, given the context. When exploring general acceptability, moderators asked participants to consider the content of the clips thinking about the wider viewing or listening public and not just their own personal concerns or views.

When assessing the language from a personal perspective, there was a spread of opinion within each group on each clip. There were relatively few clips on which the participants in each group reached a consensus in terms of personal acceptability, with some clips strongly polarising views even within demographically homogenous groups. However, there were some overall trends in opinion across the sample. More participants in the older age groups (55+) found more of the clips personally offensive than other age groups¹⁷. Gender and socio-economic group did not seem to have a

¹⁷ These findings are supported by quantitative data from Ofcom's 2009 Media Tracker, which show that 28% of respondents said they have personally found something on television to be offensive. Rates were higher amongst older respondents, particularly those aged 45 and over,

substantial effect on overall levels of personal acceptability, although there are some specific words which some women found more offensive than men. (See Section 4 for more details.)

Despite the range in levels of personal acceptability, the general principles which participants considered when assessing general acceptability were consistent across all ages and demographics, including minority groups unless otherwise highlighted in the report sections below. However, the conclusions reached on each clip in terms of its general acceptability varied within and across the groups. This depended on a wide range of considerations but particularly participants' views of the specific words and phrases used in each example considered.

3.2 Principles guiding opinion on all potentially offensive language

The principles discussed below are interrelated and in each instance of potentially offensive language on television and radio, a number of principles can contribute to whether a word is seen to be acceptable or not. A summary of the principles guiding opinion on all potentially offensive language is shown in the box below.

Summary of principles guiding opinion on all potentially offensive language

Which words were used and how frequently

Participants considered:

- How offensive were the words perceived to be?
- How frequently were they used?

Whether children were likely to be watching / listening and potential impact upon them

Participants considered:

- Were children likely to be watching/listening, and who were they likely to be watching or listening with?

where 37% of respondents said that they have personally seen or heard things on television which they find offensive.

- What was the likely impact of the words on any children who were watching or listening?

Whether the audience had made an informed choice to watch / listen

Participants considered:

- Did the language fit with the audience's expectations?
- Was the programme/presenter/character well known?
- If the programme/presenter/character was not well known, did the language fit with the audience's expectations based on channel, programme type and/or time it was broadcast?
- Was the programme on television or radio?
- Was it a programme or a trailer?
- Was a warning given before broadcast?

The intent with which the words were used

Participants considered:

- Were the words aimed at individuals?
- Were they used aggressively?
- Were they used to make fun of people?
- Were they a legitimate part of the story line or gratuitous?
- Were they being used for educational purposes/to make a moral point?
- Did they reflect how the words are used in everyday life?

Whether the broadcaster acted responsibly

Participants considered:

- Was it reasonable to have expected the broadcaster to control the language used, edited or bleeped it?
- Did it set a bad example/encourage use of the word?
- Who used the language (e.g. paid presenter, public figure, guest, member of the public) and to what extent was the broadcaster responsible?
- Was it said by accident or design?
- Was it used for gain / to boost ratings?

3.2.1 Which words were used and how frequently

The potentially offensive language itself was a key principle which participants considered when assessing each clip. There were two related considerations: how offensive specific words were considered to be, and how frequently they were used.

How offensive were the words perceived to be?

Participants felt that some words were considerably stronger than others, and these are covered in more detail in Section 4 below. The mildest words were considered acceptable in most situations, whereas considerable care was seen to be necessary over the use of the strongest words. The words used were of less importance post-watershed, unless very strong or repetitive language was being used between 9pm and 10pm on a weekend night, when participants thought that children might be more likely to hear it.

“I suppose your ears pick up a bit more when you do hear a word that is offensive but I was not offended by it, because quite frankly it was 10 o’clock at night and I would not let my children watch something like that anyway and does it not say that there was a voice over beforehand saying it had very strong language and adult humour so it’s to be expected.”

Group discussion, female, older children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white and BME,
Slough

How frequently were they used?

Offensive language which was otherwise considered broadly acceptable was considered unacceptable by some when used too frequently. A clear example of this is the television celebrity chef reality programme clip (Clip 10), where many participants thought that the words used were acceptable, but that their frequent repetition was unnecessary and distasteful.

“I don’t think he actually said anything other than the word ‘fuck’ through the whole time he spoke. I thought it was really unnecessary, it was literally every other word wasn’t it?”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

“To me I think it was outrageous, because every other word didn’t have to be ‘fuck’.”

Depth interview, family member of a person with a mental health condition, London

3.2.2 Whether children were likely to be watching / listening and the potential impact upon them

Whether children were likely to be watching or listening and, if so, what impact the language might have on them was a key consideration for participants in assessing the language used within the clips, especially in relation to how generally acceptable this was, rather than personally offensive. Participants took a number of issues into account when assessing the likely impact of potentially offensive language upon children.

Were children likely to be watching/listening, and who were they likely to be watching or listening with?

When considering whether children were likely to be watching, participants thought about both the time the programme was broadcast and the target audience for the programme.

In terms of the time of broadcast, most participants found potentially offensive language more acceptable if it was aired at a time when children were unlikely to be watching or listening – post-watershed, or, to a lesser extent, during the school day. Within this there seemed to be a sliding scale of acceptability, which was largely

dictated by the age of the children likely to be listening and the language used. Participants' views on individual terms are discussed in Section 4.

In the daytime, when very small children are likely to be watching television, only the mildest words, such as 'bum' and 'damn' were considered acceptable. An example of this was the comedy cartoon clip (Clip 4), taken from a long running American cartoon sitcom aimed at a wide range of adults and children. The clip was broadcast at 5.05pm on a Sunday and contains the line "*how much did he piss away on this?*". For some participants, the use of the word 'piss' was less acceptable because it was aired in a daytime slot.

"It's a lot to do with kids that show, so I don't think they should have used that word 'cos it's spoiling it for children."

Depth interview, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white, Glasgow

"I don't find that acceptable to be honest. For adults it's fine, I wouldn't want my children to watch it."

Group discussion, male, older children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Cardiff

From around 6pm until 9pm slightly stronger terms such as 'shit' and 'bitch' were considered acceptable by many, provided the use fitted in with the other principles set out below. Post-watershed, if strong terms such as 'cunt' or 'fuck' were used repetitively, many felt that these should be aired post 10pm, particularly at weekends. This was to prevent children from hearing the language as children may be watching television later than on weeknights.

Alongside the time of broadcast, most participants also believed that the acceptability of the language depended on whether the show was targeting children, families or adults. Programmes aimed specifically at children (viewing alone or with parents) were

expected to contain very little offensive language. Consequently, if offensive language was used on such programmes, it was likely to be less acceptable to participants.

However, many participants believed children were less likely to choose factual, adult programming and consequently felt that it was acceptable for some adult programmes to contain stronger language, even if aired pre-watershed.

“If you’re going to let your child watch something like that [pre-watershed television soap (Clip 8)] you should really check out what the show is first because it is billed as an adult programme. It’s not on CBeebies.”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Belfast

For radio, the time of day was also a consideration, coupled with the target audience for the radio station. This research found that stations targeting adults have more leeway, as children were considered less likely to be interested in the channel. The radio interview with John Lennon (Clip 15) was an example of this. This interview was aired at 9am on a Friday on BBC Radio 4 with a pre-transmission warning and contained the words ‘fuck’ and ‘bastard’. Some participants thought that this language was acceptable because children would be unlikely to be listening to Radio 4. The fact that it was aired in the daytime, when most children would be in school was also a consideration which led some participants to consider it acceptable, despite the frequent use of potentially offensive language.

“The language wouldn’t be unsuitable because I mean there is not going to be any great [number of] children listening to Radio 4 at 9 o’clock in the morning.”

Group discussion, female, older children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white and BME, Slough

However, some participants found it less acceptable because they were concerned that some children might still have been listening at that time e.g. in the car whilst being driven to school.

In conjunction with the time of broadcast and target audience for the show, more concerns were raised when children could be watching or listening without parental guidance. This was a particular concern for television during day time and ‘teatime’ slots, when parents may leave children alone to watch television. Whilst many participants felt that it was at least partly the parent’s responsibility to control children’s radio and television usage, they also thought that during these times they should not need to worry about what their children might hear or see.

However, the research found that stronger language was more acceptable in an early evening programme, such as the pre-watershed television soap clip (Clip 8). This clip was from a long-running soap opera watched by a broad range of people and contained an argument between some of the well known female characters in which the words ‘bitch’, ‘cow’ and ‘slut’ were repeatedly used. In this clip, the language was considered acceptable by some participants who felt that parents were likely to be watching with their children and could therefore switch off if they found the language too strong.

“They can say what they like because... the choice not to let them [the children] watch... is down to us.”

Group discussion, male, older children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Cardiff

“There’s nothing offensive about it, I wouldn’t have been offended and I wouldn’t have any bother at all with my son seeing that.”

Depth interview, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white, Glasgow

What was the likely impact of the words on any children who were watching or listening?

Most participants also considered the likely impact of the words upon children, as follows:

- Were the words known to the children?
- Were the words already used by the children?
- Would the use of the words have encouraged children to use them more?

These considerations were raised by both parents and non-parents within the sample.

Many participants considered whether or not children would already know and understand the words being used. Some parents worried about their children asking them the meaning of offensive words they had heard on television and radio, and some non-parents also raised this as a concern when thinking about how others might feel about the clip. Some were also worried by the thought of children using offensive language in innocence of its true meaning. An example of this was the radio pop song clip (Clip 16), that features the lyrics *“If you seek Amy”* that sound like ‘F.U.C.K. me’. However, some participants believed that words that children do not understand are more acceptable, because they would not notice them. For example, in the pre-watershed television talent show (Clip 1), an older, female taking part in the show sang *“We’re having a gang-bang”*. Some participants felt this language was acceptable because children would not understand the term or realise that it was offensive.

“For young children it would have been over their heads.”

Depth interview, male, older children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white, Belfast

Words which were generally considered to be in everyday use on the playground were considered more acceptable by many participants.

“Girls, they’ll say that jokingly with their friends – ‘you’re nothing but a cow’ – they are just joking when they say it, it’s a common thing.”

Depth interview, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white, Glasgow

“I know children might be watching it but I’m sure they can probably hear worse than that in the street most days anyway.”

Depth interview, female to male transgender participant, Manchester

However, words tended to be less acceptable where participants believed their use would encourage children to use them. Many parents in the sample said that they did not allow their children to use certain words, and believed that hearing adults use them on television or radio can undermine this authority, particularly where they are used by public or popular figures. These participants did not want these words to be made to appear ‘cool’ to children. These views were also expressed by non-parents. In the case of the radio pop song (Clip 16) that features the lyrics *“If you seek Amy”* that sound like ‘F.U.C.K. me’, many participants were concerned about the impact this might have on children who heard it being broadcast on the radio.

“I think if the kids were in the back of the car singing along to it, they would not understand the context, but they would be singing the words and I don’t want to hear that coming out of my kid’s mouth.”

Group discussion, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white and BME, London

“It could be a bit unsuitable because there’s a lot of little girls that see [the singer in the radio pop song (Clip 16)] as a role model and they would be singing it to their parents and it’s a bit inappropriate.”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

“I actually don’t really care but I got on my high horse about wee girls jumping about singing that and like if they’re singing that they don’t know what they’re singing.”

Group discussion, male, no children, aged 18-30, ABC1, white, Glasgow

3.2.3 Whether the audience had made an informed choice to watch/listen

When children are not likely to be watching or listening, the ability of the audience to make an informed choice was often a priority consideration. Most participants felt that, provided the broadcaster had acted responsibly and the other principles relating to the specific words used, and the intent behind the usage were observed, it should be for the individual or parent to decide whether or not to avoid programmes containing potentially offensive language. Consequently, when assessing the levels of acceptability within a programme, they took into account the information that would be available to viewers and listeners when deciding whether or not to watch or listen to the programme. The key issues they considered were:

Did the language fit with the audience’s expectations?

Most participants thought that offensive language was more acceptable when it was in line with their expectations of a programme. For example, many participants felt that most viewers would expect the television celebrity chef reality programme (Clip 10) to contain offensive language because the presenter was known for his use of strong language. This meant that they could be avoided by those who find such language unacceptable, therefore making the language more acceptable given the programme it is used within.

“I thought [the celebrity chef presenter] was renowned for bad language so what do you expect when you are watching his programme?”

Group discussion, female, older children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white and BME, Slough

Participants tended to find language less acceptable if it did not match their expectations of a programme. Both “piss away” in the comedy cartoon clip (Clip 4) and “gang bang” in the family-orientated television talent show clip (Clip 1) were considered unacceptable by some participants because their use did not match their expectations.

“I think it’s the fact that it’s on a cartoon that appeals to kids, you just wouldn’t expect to be watching a cartoon and it’s got swearing in it.”

Group discussion, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, white, Cardiff

Was the programme/presenter/character well known?

If a programme was well known, participants tended to feel that most people would know what to expect in terms of offensive language and so could choose to avoid it.

“It’s what the programme is known for, you know [the presenter] is outspoken.”

Group discussion, female, lesbian and bisexual women, Manchester

[Talking about Clip 7, the television entertainment show on cars] *“I just don’t find that offensive. To me it’s just all part of the overall show, it’s what is expected of them.”*

Depth interview, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white, Glasgow

“It’s something I wouldn’t have expected 20 years ago but nowadays television on a soap it’s what I expect, part and parcel I would have thought, things like ‘cow’ and ‘bitch’.”

Depth interview, family member of a person with mobility difficulties, London

Many believed that broadcasters needed to make greater efforts to raise awareness of potentially offensive language in newer programmes, where the audience can have no knowledge on which to base their expectations. An example of this was the adult-orientated television sitcom (Clip 11), in which the words ‘fuck’ and ‘cunt’ were used.

This was a relatively new programme which was not known to many participants prior to the research. However, participants considered that the broadcaster pre-warned or informed viewers of the offensive language content sufficiently to compensate for this lack of prior knowledge.

“Folk that watch these things know what to expect and they get a warning before it and there is a description in the paper, they know it’s an adult comedy so don’t watch it if they are going to get offended.”

Depth interview, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white, Glasgow

If the programme/presenter/character was not well known, did the language fit with the audience’s expectations based on channel, programme type and/or time it was broadcast?

If a programme, its presenter or main character was not well known, participants were often able to develop a set of expectations based on a combination of the channel, programme type or time of broadcast. As long as the use of language fitted with their expectations based on this information, many participants considered it generally acceptable, even if it was language they did not enjoy watching or listening to.

In terms of programme type, many participants found strong language more acceptable in dramas, provided its use was realistic and stronger language was not used prior to the watershed. For example, the language used in the soap opera clip (Clip 8) was considered acceptable by many because it was realistic and was not too strong for a pre-watershed audience.

Strong and offensive language in documentaries was considered acceptable by many participants, provided it was used for educational purposes or to make a moral point.

Participants’ response to potentially offensive language used in comedy varied depending on the type of comedy. Overall, in this research study, participants tended

to find strong language used in a comedic setting acceptable, provided there was no malicious or aggressive intent. For example, the language used in the adult satirical television comedy clip (Clip 11), which included the words 'fuck' and 'cunt', was considered acceptable by some participants because it was seen to contribute to the comedy and was not aimed at an individual. In family comedies, some participants were more accepting of mild to moderate terms even though children could be watching; this was in instances when they saw the words as contributing to adult humour and consequently likely to be overlooked by children. The comedy cartoon clip (Clip 4) was an example of this.

Many participants felt that, in principle, the nature of the channel should not affect their views on whether language is generally acceptable or not. However, in practice, when considering whether the audience was able to make an informed choice, participants took into account their perceptions of the broadcaster or channel. For example, some thought that offensive language was more expected on Channel 4 and BBC Two than it was on BBC One, as shown by this quote about the adult satirical comedy (Clip 11) shown on Channel 4.

“Also I think the fact that it’s on Channel 4. If it was on BBC One or HTV then maybe I would be more horrified, but with it being on Channel 4, I think people would expect it more on Channel 4 than they would on the other channels.”

Group discussion, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, white, Cardiff

Some participants also expressed the view that it was more acceptable to use stronger language on 'niche' channels than the main channels because people were less likely to be watching 'niche' channels without having made an active choice to do so. In addition, some participants felt that the BBC had a duty to maintain higher standards than other broadcasters because it is a public institution.

For example, many participants were unfamiliar with the adult satirical television comedy (Clip 11), which was broadcast on Channel 4 at 10pm on a Friday and used the words 'fuck' and 'cunt'. However, the language used was in line with many participants' expectations based on their knowledge of the channel, programme type and time of broadcast.

"It's Channel 4, Friday 10 o'clock, that is where you would expect, let's be honest. At 10 o'clock, especially on Channel 4, they are showing stuff where there is lots of swearing."

Group discussion, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white and BME, London

"Channel 4, 10pm Friday...certainly at that time, on that day as well, you are going to expect, nudity, swearing, violence. It is something you would expect I think because the trends in TV, that is what you tend to expect late weekends."

Depth interview, male, no children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white, Cardiff

In terms of time of broadcast, many participants believed that there was a general expectation that programmes were more likely to contain offensive language after the watershed. Consequently, the fact that a programme was being aired post-watershed was considered another way of helping the audience to make an informed choice.

"After watershed you have got to expect stuff that you might not want to see, it is up to you if you watch it."

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

Time of broadcast was less of a consideration on radio, where channel and programme were more important in determining audience expectations. However, many participants assumed that the 9pm watershed also applied to radio, and as a result, did

not expect to hear strong language during the day on the radio, regardless of whether children would be likely to be listening to the channel or programme in question.

Was the programme on television or radio?

Opinion was divided over whether offensive language was more acceptable on radio or television. Some participants felt that there was more leeway on radio as people, and children in particular, are less likely to be drawn into an unsuitable programme where there are no visuals to attract their attention.

“Younger children don’t want to listen to music; they just want to see what’s on TV. In their spare time they would watch TV more than they would listen to the radio.”

Group discussion, male, older children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Cardiff

However, other participants thought that there was more likelihood of encountering offensive language by accident on the radio, as people flick through the stations without using the menus, as they would on television.

“With the radio, the chances of someone being in the car with kids flicking through stations, there’s a very high chance that would happen.”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

Was it a programme or a trailer?

Most participants found potentially offensive language less acceptable if it was included in a trailer. They thought it was harder to avoid than in a pre-scheduled programme and was consequently imposed upon them. In this research study, an example of this was the trailer for a fashion reality television programme clip (Clip 2) shown during children’s programmes on a Sunday afternoon, which contains two uses of the word ‘bitch’, one spoken and partially bleeped and one written in an on-screen graphic.

“I think the other thing is it’s a trailer so you’re not choosing to watch it. Your personal choice is taken away because you’re just kind of sitting and waiting for the programme you are watching to come back.”

Group discussion, male, no children, aged 18-30, ABC1, white, Glasgow

Was a warning given before broadcast?

Most participants felt that potentially offensive language was more acceptable if a warning was given before the programme was aired. Some still worried that people might turn the television or radio on half way through a programme and miss the warning, but generally thought that this problem was unavoidable.

“Well actually I think it was OK because they had advertised that there was going to be swearing in it so people know it was going to be on so they didn’t need to listen to it.”

Depth interview, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white, Glasgow

3.2.4 The intent with which the words were used

The intent with which the potentially offensive language was used was also a key issue which participants considered when assessing the acceptability of each clip, particularly from a general acceptability perspective.

The intent with which the language was used was considered in relation to potentially offensive language on television both pre and post-watershed. However, it was seen as more important for programmes shown before the watershed. Post-watershed, only extreme examples were likely to be considered unacceptable.

In some instances, the intent with which the word was used was seen as more of a consideration than whether the audience had made an informed choice to watch or listen because of the likely impact on individuals in the targeted groups and on society as a whole. For example, the use of the word ‘retard’ in the radio daily magazine

programme clip (Clip 14) was considered unacceptable at any time or on any channel by many participants.

“The thing is, even after 9 o’clock or later on at night I still don’t think it’s acceptable cos it was just too offensive.”

Depth interview, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white, Glasgow

When discussing the intent with which potentially offensive language was used, participants talked about the following areas:

Were the words aimed at individuals?

Most participants considered language to be more offensive if it was aimed at an individual. For example, they felt that ‘fucking’ was less offensive when used to emphasise a statement, such as “*you’ve got to stop the fucking bullshit*” in the television celebrity chef reality programme (Clip 10), than it is when used to strengthen an insult aimed at a person, such as “*you fucking bitch*” in the trailer for a fashion reality television programme (Clip 2).

Were they used aggressively?

Most participants believed that when the words were used in anger, they were less acceptable. For example, the language used in a pre-watershed television soap clip (Clip 8) was considered by some to be more offensive because the character is shouting at another character in anger.

“I thought the language was horrible... They used a lot of swear words but the same swear words could have been used in something more lighthearted and it wouldn’t have been so offensive. It was just the whole scene of it, it was aggressive, it was horrible.”

Depth interview, person with a mental health condition, London

“I was just shocked that [the pre-watershed television soap (Clip 8)] would put those words into their programmes, the words themselves didn’t shock me because they’re not that bad. But it was the behaviour more than the language that offended me.”

Group discussion, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, white, Cardiff

Conversely, when one guest on the television adult comedy pop quiz (Clip 13) calls another ‘retarded’, this was considered more acceptable as it was said in jest.

“I didn’t find it at all offensive [use of ‘retard’ on the television adult comedy pop quiz (Clip 13)], it was all said in a lighthearted way, wasn’t offensive. Again it all depends how it is used, they used you ‘dick’, ‘twat’, ‘retarded’, then he said to his mate ‘oh, you are so Welsh’, which might be offensive to the Welsh but in this setting, come on, if you can’t take a little bit of lighthearted humour you should get over yourself.”

Depth interview, person with a mental health condition, London

“Because of the context of it, it was jovial, part of the humour, it wasn’t deliberately offensive I don’t feel, it was done in jest.”

Depth interview, family member of person with a severe mental health condition,
London

Were they used to make fun of people?

Where potentially offensive terms were thought to be being used to mock an individual or group unfairly, they were considered less acceptable. For example, many participants found it acceptable for one guest on the television adult comedy pop quiz (Clip 13) to mock another by calling them a ‘twat’ as this was considered harmless banter which is not intended to hurt anybody. By contrast, some found the words ‘cock in a frock’, used by in the adult satirical television comedy clip (Clip 12) towards a transgender character more offensive, as they felt the words were being used to

ridicule a character to an unfair extent, without giving them a chance to retaliate and defend themselves, although this view was not shared by all participants.

“Obviously this fella is waiting to get his sex change operation, all these other ones were making jokes, I thought not in a very funny way about something that can be very, very serious for somebody who is in that situation and I felt sometimes it was a bit distasteful.”

Group discussion, male, no children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, ABC1, white, Belfast

Were they a legitimate part of the story line or gratuitous?

When participants thought that there was good reason for the use of potentially offensive language, they found it more acceptable than when they felt it was being used gratuitously. For example, when the word ‘cunt’ was used in the adult-orientated television sitcom (Clip 11), some participants thought it was an integral part of the comedy. Some also felt that the language in the adult satirical television comedy programme (Clip 12) was acceptable because it was part of the humour of the programme.

“I thought the language was fine. References, innuendos and subtle comments, I felt were all part of the humour... I thought the swearing and the innuendos and stuff went well with that kind of comedy, it fitted in well.”

Depth interview, family member of person with a mobility difficulty, London

“I watched the whole series of this, and if you had asked me if there was swearing in the programme I would have said no because I think again it’s in the context and it didn’t stick out for me.”

Group discussion, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, white, Cardiff

In contrast, in the television celebrity chef reality programme (Clip 10), many felt that the language in this clip was repeated unnecessarily without adding to the content of the programme itself.

“They are making a programme about trying to turn around businesses but why on earth have you got all this language? I didn’t see the point of it. Perhaps if someone was really frustrated that’s fair enough but surely most of this could have been edited out and we would still have got a sense of it?”

Group Discussion, male to female transgender participants, Manchester

Were they being used for educational purposes/to make a moral point?

Many participants said that if the offensive language was used to show viewers / listeners that such language can be hurtful or damaging, then it was more acceptable.

“You see films that are made now about the Holocaust in the Second World War, if they didn’t have ... people being called ‘you Jew’, ‘you queer’ or ‘you pikey’, people wouldn’t learn from it.”

Group discussion, female, lesbian and bisexual women, Manchester

The research study found that this was particularly true for discriminatory language. An example of this was the teenage-orientated television soap clip (Clip 3), in which a young white man accosted a young Asian woman and called her a *“little Paki”*. Many participants thought that the word was being used as part of an anti-racism storyline and was consequently more acceptable.

“It is obviously what happened, it shows some walks of life. These things can happen, people can be bullied, in a way it is probably a good thing that it can help youngsters who maybe are being bullied just how cowardly these people are and maybe to get help somewhere.”

Depth interview, family member of a person with a mental health condition, London

“I find it acceptable because I know this show is aimed at teenagers and at the end of the show it does say if anybody has any problems like this then there is a helpline, so it's kind of highlighting this because this is real life, this is what happens in life, and at the end it does say you know if people are getting bullied, due to these circumstances then you can phone up and get some kind of advice.”

Group discussion, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white and BME, London

This principle also applied to strong language. For example, a few participants felt that the strong language and aggressive behaviour shown in the pre-watershed television soap (Clip 8) was sufficiently unpleasant to put people off using it.

“I think it depends on the way that it's done. If it's done and it's sort of laughed and joked about and made little of then you know it's kind of a bit wrong. But if it's done within a storyline and within a context and that's part of the storyline is how that is a wrong thing to do, then to me that's a good thing because it can teach a lesson.”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Belfast

Did they reflect how the words are used in everyday life?

Many participants said that words were more acceptable if they were realistic within their context and for the character using them. For example, many participants thought that the language in the pre-watershed television soap clip (Clip 8) was realistic because it was the sort of language a person with the personality and background of the character would say, if placed in that situation. They felt that substituting words such as 'bitch' and 'cow' with milder words would have substantially decreased the credibility of the programme, and hence their enjoyment.

“It is a drama and trying to portray the type of person who would use that kind of language. If you tame down all the language so that they were speaking very politely it just didn’t make any sense.”

Group Discussion, male to female transgender participants, Manchester

However, some participants disagreed with this perspective, and said that they wanted television and radio broadcasters to have higher standards than would be generally used in society.

Overall, the intent with which words were used was a particularly important consideration when participants were discussing potentially discriminatory language. Almost all participants believed that where language was used deliberately in order to discriminate against an individual or group, it was less acceptable. An example of this was the use of the word ‘retard’ in the radio daily magazine programme clip (Clip 14), aimed at a politician’s child who has Down’s Syndrome.

“He’s making fun of a boy with Down’s Syndrome and he doesn’t even know him and he doesn’t know what it’s like for the family.”

Group discussion, male, no children, aged 18-30, ABC1, white, Glasgow

3.2.5 Did the broadcaster act responsibly?

In addition to assessing the way in which the words were used, participants also took into account how reasonable it would be to have expected the broadcaster to have prevented their use. Judgments about the broadcaster’s actions tended to be applied in isolation, after the other principles were discussed. It tended to be a considered response rather than an immediate one. Participants also gave broadcasters more leeway post-watershed than they did pre-watershed as this was an accepted time for the broadcasting of more controversial content.

When assessing whether the broadcaster had acted responsibly, participants considered the following issues:

Was it reasonable to expect the broadcaster to have controlled the language used, edited or bleeped it?

Some participants accepted that there can be circumstances that make it impossible or very difficult for a broadcaster to prevent the use of otherwise unacceptable language. For example, some participants felt that it was unreasonable to expect broadcasters to prevent accidental use of offensive language on live programmes, although they did expect an apology to be broadcast afterwards.

“I would have been more offended maybe if it was on Coronation Street or something like that but that was live TV and you can’t control what comes out of people’s mouths.”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Belfast

In this research study, an example of this was the radio daily magazine programme (Clip 14), in which an American stand-up comedian refers to a politician’s children, one of whom has Down’s Syndrome, as ‘retards’ during an interview. Some thought that the language used in this clip was beyond the broadcasters’ control, as it was a live show and the interviewer was clearly making efforts to control her guest, or at least to distance herself and the show from his behaviour. However, some participants believed that the broadcaster should have stopped the interview as soon as the guest started to express his clearly offensive views about the politician’s children. Some also said that the broadcaster should have expected that this comedian would make potentially offensive comments so should not have broadcast the interview live.

“It was disgusting, there was no need for him to say that, [they] should have stopped that interview, they shouldn’t have let him carry on.”

Depth interview, female, no children, aged 55-75, C2DE, Afro-Caribbean, Cardiff

“They must have known something about [the comedian’s] work in order to get him on...So there’s no excuse really for not knowing how strongly challenging his language and behaviour were likely to be.”

Depth interview, female to male transgender participant, Manchester

When programmes were not live and participants felt that the language was unacceptable, they often went on to assess whether the programme could have been edited or bleeped, without impacting on the content.

“I think if they had to play it [the radio interview with John Lennon (Clip 15)], they could have bleeped it out definitely.”

Group discussion, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white and BME, London

[Talking about the television chef reality programme (Clip 10)] “They either shouldn’t have shown that clip or it should’ve been bleeped out, or most of it, so no, I just thought it was totally unacceptable.”

Depth interview, female, older children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white, Belfast

“If that was live then fair enough, but it wasn’t, it was an edited clip and they still decided to play that bit and they could have taken it out.”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

Some participants thought that bleeping could reduce the impact of the language, although many commented that when the language is being used repeatedly, the bleeping would make it impossible to follow the rest of the dialogue. Some also

commented that bleeping could actually draw attention to the language, particularly for children, who will then either ask what word was being bleeped, or work it out from watching the speaker's lips.

"My children would want to know what had been bleeped out and why."

Group discussion, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, white, Cardiff

"I think, having teenage daughters, that's put there deliberately, and the bleeping gives it more mystique, and they are going to go, 'oh I have got to see this', and I think that's a ploy to get them to watch it, I don't like programmes like that."

Group discussion, male, older children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Cardiff

Some also felt that where bleeping was inappropriate, the broadcaster could have considered editing out the strongest or most repetitive language. Some other participants did not agree with this as they believed that this could amount to limiting freedom of speech.

Did it set a bad example/encourage use of the word?

If participants felt that the language broadcast was likely to encourage further use of the word or present potentially discriminatory language as socially acceptable, they were more likely to find the language unacceptable and consider that the broadcaster had not acted responsibly.

Participants applied this principle to all language, but it was particularly relevant to discriminatory language and was a key concern for participants from minority audiences. For example, the use of the word 'gay' to mean 'rubbish' in the family orientated American sitcom clip (Clip 18) was considered unacceptable by some gay female participants because a child character uses the word in front of an adult and is not censored for doing so. This prompted concerns that other children would follow the

example set in the programme, and more general concern that it presents the use of this word as socially acceptable.

“If they’re using that language without even being told or anything about it as they get older they’ll just use it more and more.”

Group discussion, female, lesbian and bisexual women, Manchester

Who used the language (e.g. paid presenter, public figure, guest, member of the public) and to what extent was the broadcaster responsible?

Many participants believed that broadcasters had more responsibility for the language used by presenters and public figures than they did for members of the public. Where the language was used by a paid presenter or a public figure, participants usually took into account their reputation, image and role. For example, whilst many felt that the presenter of the television celebrity chef reality programme (Clip 10) could use offensive language because it is part of his image, some commented that the professional sports commentator in the live television sport coverage (Clip 5) should know better than to use the word ‘pikey’.

“He meant it in a derogatory way, and you are professional on live TV, in the afternoon...you are actually paid to make sure you are broadcast to mainstream audience, so therefore you are trained to speak to a mainstream audience. You cannot say derogatory words like that.”

Group discussion, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white and BME, London

Opinion was divided in terms of the level of responsibility that the broadcaster should take if potentially offensive language was used by members of the public. Some participants thought that broadcasters should present real people as they are. They also commented that in live programmes the actions of individual members of the public were beyond the broadcasters’ control. However, some participants said that

broadcasters remain responsible for the content of the programme, whether the people taking part are members of the public or paid presenters.

Was it said by accident or design?

Some participants were more tolerant towards offensive language when they believed it had been said by accident or in ignorance. For example, in the television house-mate reality programme clip (Clip 9), many felt the girl who said 'nigger' did so in ignorance of the effect it would have.

"The thing is she was a bit stupid in what she did, she genuinely didn't mean it in an offensive manner."

Group discussion, female, lesbian and bisexual women, Manchester

"It's not scripted, you can't control what they're saying in there."

Group discussion,, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, white, Cardiff

Similarly, many believed that the word 'pikey' just 'slipped out' in the live television sports coverage clip (Clip 5) and that there was no intention to offend, although they did expect the broadcaster to recognise the mistake and apologise.

"ITV should be saying that he shouldn't be saying things like that on television and stuff but it happens, what can you do?"

Group discussion, male, traveller, London

Was it used for gain / to boost ratings?

Some participants found potentially offensive language less acceptable where they felt the broadcaster had used it in a deliberate attempt to boost ratings or gain attention. This theme was particularly relevant to the television house-mate reality programme (Clip 9), where many thought the clip could have been edited out of the programme

without damaging its overall content, but that instead the broadcaster chose to air it in order to create controversy and consequently raise public interest in the episode.

“[The broadcaster] played on it because they knew it would be a ratings thing. They only had to show that in the adverts [trailers] and then they’ve got half a million people watching it just for the sake of a big argument. And they’ve stopped live streaming anyway so they could easily have cut it out.”

Group discussion, female, lesbian and bisexual women, Manchester

3.3 Principles guiding opinion on discriminatory language only

The previous sections presented findings related to consumer attitudes towards all potentially offensive language. This section focuses specifically on participants’ attitudes towards discriminatory language¹⁸.

The study found that all of the above principles applied when participants from both the general UK and minority samples were discussing potentially offensive discriminatory language, and the particular issue of ‘intent’ was a key consideration for all participants when considering the acceptability of discriminatory language. The specific words used were also a key consideration in participants’ views on whether a clip was generally acceptable or unacceptable. It is important to note that views on the individual discriminatory words varied substantially both within the general UK sample, and between the general UK sample and the minority audiences. Views on the individual words are discussed in detail in Section 4.

Participants also raised some additional principles when they discussed clips that included language which could be considered discriminatory. Participants considered the level of familiarity and social acceptability of the words, whether the programme

¹⁸ By discriminatory language, we mean potentially offensive words which might be seen as linked to or aimed at a particular group.

was balanced and whether there was an opportunity to respond. Participants also took into account the ways in which the words can be interpreted and how specific contexts could affect interpretation. Some words and phrases explored in the research had more than one meaning depending on the context.

In the discussion on each of these additional considerations below, the views of the general UK sample are presented first, followed by the views of the minority audiences where they differ from the general UK sample.

A summary of the additional principles guiding opinion on discriminatory language only is shown in the box below.

Summary of additional principles guiding opinion on discriminatory language only

Familiarity and perceptions of social acceptability

Participants from the general UK sample considered:

- How familiar was the word, and was it seen as socially acceptable/unacceptable?
- What was the potential impact of the language on the group it was aimed at?

Who the words were directed towards

Participants from both the general UK sample and the minority audiences considered:

- Was the programme balanced, and was there an opportunity for the group being targeted to respond?

How words could be interpreted / how they were used

Participants from both the general UK sample and the minority audiences considered:

- Did the word have other or broader meanings?

3.3.1 Familiarity and perceptions of social acceptability

Within the general UK sample, participants' familiarity with discriminatory words and perceptions of their social acceptability affected their views on the use of the words on television and radio. There were a number of issues which were discussed when talking about acceptability.

How familiar was the word, and was it seen as socially acceptable/unacceptable?

Most participants from the general UK sample took into account their understanding of society's views on certain words. For example, many participants believed that it was generally agreed that words like 'nigger' and 'Paki' are socially taboo.

"In the 50s and 60s those words were normal, in the last 10 to 15 years...it's become unacceptable now, especially on the television."

Depth interview, male, no children/empty nester, aged 55-75, ABC1, Asian,
Birmingham

"'Nigger' can be offensive and taken as a racist comment."

Group discussion, female, no children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, C2DE, white,
Glasgow

"It ['nigger'] is an offensive word, sounds offensive. Black people don't like being called 'niggers'."

Depth interview, male, no children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white, Cardiff

For some participants, the fact that a word is known to be socially unacceptable meant that they thought it should not be used on television and radio. In contrast, some participants felt that there were some contexts in which socially unacceptable words could be acceptable on television or radio, e.g. for educational purposes. However, those participants expected broadcasters to take extreme care when using words

which are widely considered to be socially unacceptable. These views were expressed by participants from both the general UK sample and minority audiences.

Where a word was considered to be discriminatory but it had not received the same level of public disapprobation, some participants from the general UK sample believed it was less offensive. For example, some participants felt that ‘Chink’¹⁹ was less offensive than ‘Paki’ or ‘nigger’ because it was not as well known to be socially unacceptable. However, other participants felt that, in principle, ‘Chink’ was as discriminatory as ‘Paki’ or ‘nigger’, and should be treated in the same way even though it was not as well known.

When participants from the general UK sample were unfamiliar with the words, they tended to consider the words to be acceptable. For example, ‘Fenian’²⁰ was thought to be acceptable by many participants purely because they believed that most members of the public would not understand it and so would not be offended by its use.

This was also true for participants from minority audiences, although their level of familiarity with some words was different from the main sample (for more detail see Section 4.2²¹ on individual words).

Also the issue of social acceptability was generally less of a consideration for participants from minority groups when discussing words which could be seen as aimed at them as individuals. For example, some of the transgender participants in this research felt strongly that the word ‘tranny’ should not be broadcast on television or radio, regardless of whether it is seen to be socially acceptable or unacceptable.

¹⁹ ‘Chink’ – “A Chinese person” (slang, offensive) [Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, sixth edition, 2007]

²⁰ ‘Fenian’ – “one of the names of the ancient population of Ireland” [Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, sixth edition, 2007]. Also used in a derogatory way to refer to Roman Catholics.

²¹ This section covers both the views of participants who were unfamiliar and those who were familiar with words being investigated.

“I think what is different though is that if you did use those derogatory terms about other communities, a bigger percentage of any general crowd would look and see who had overheard that. Whereas if it’s about the trans community we are further behind in that general acceptance so fewer people in a crowd of people will be looking to see who overheard and would it offend someone.”

Group discussion, male to female transgender participants, Manchester

Some gay male participants thought it was not acceptable to use the word ‘gay’ in anything other than a purely descriptive manner because they found it personally offensive.

“Isn’t the point that they’re broadcasters, they’re not just someone in the street? We might agree that gay used as a derogatory way is quite common ... amongst the youth or wherever but that’s different from a broadcaster aping that, repeating that, it is not good.”

Group discussion, male, gay and bisexual men, London

Some participants from the general UK sample also took into account the number of people that could be offended when discussing potentially offensive discriminatory language. Where they believed a large group of people were likely to be offended by the discriminatory language, these participants were more likely to find it generally unacceptable. For example, when discussing the word ‘nigger’, some participants commented on the size of the Afro-Caribbean population and the number of people affected.

“I think transvestites are in the small minority as well like pikeys, so I don’t think it would offend as much as ‘nigger’ or ‘Paki’ would.”

Group discussion, male, no children, aged 18-30, ABC1, white, Glasgow

This was not a consideration for participants from minority groups when discussing words which could be seen as aimed at them as individuals. However, they recognised that it might affect the views of others.

In addition, some members of the general UK sample expressed sympathy with particular groups. In these cases they found language directed towards that group more unacceptable, for example, in relation to the use of the word 'retard' in the radio daily magazine programme clip (Clip 14).

"It's the thought of all the people who I've got such empathy for who bring up Down's kids, the thought that somebody is slagging them off and calling them 'retards', I just thought that was appalling."

Group discussion, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, white, Cardiff

"It's not like a typical swearing word, but it's much more offensive and insensitive."

Group discussion, male, no children, aged 55-75, ABC1, white, Belfast

Where language targeted a group that participants were less familiar with or less sympathetic towards, some participants found it less offensive. However, other participants did not identify sympathy as a relevant consideration when viewing material as unacceptable.

What was the potential impact of the language on the group it was aimed at?

Many participants from the general UK sample considered the possible impact of the language on individuals within the group it was being aimed at. They often did this by referring to their own friends and acquaintances who belong to the group that the language discriminates against. For example, many thought that the use of 'gay' and 'ginger beer' in the clips from a television entertainment series on cars (Clip 7) would

be considered amusing by their gay friends, and consequently found the words acceptable.

“I’ve got gay friends and half of them just take the mick out of themselves anyway.”

Group discussion, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, white, Cardiff

Where participants from the general UK sample were less certain of the impact on individuals within a group, opinion was divided, with some tending to dismiss the degree of offence likely to be caused, while other participants preferred to take no risks of offending. The adult satirical television comedy clip (Clip 12) which contains the phrase ‘cock in a frock’ exemplifies this lack of consensus

“I think they [transgendered people] are pretty much prepared to take it, if they did go to that extreme, they know what’s coming they are going to be taken the mick out of.”

Group discussion, male, older children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Cardiff

“I find it highly offensive. These people have a hard enough time without some stupid show making it worse.”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Belfast

In addition, many participants felt they did not have the knowledge and understanding of the transgender group to assess its likely impact accurately.

Similarly, when assessing the live sports coverage clip (Clip 5) where the word ‘pikey’ was used, some participants found it hard to assess how acceptable the use of the word was because they did not know how travellers felt about the word.

“Because we don’t know if they are offended or not by it, then it is hard. Because we know the word ‘Paki’, that is offensive, we can make a decision on it. Because we don’t know if they are that offended by it, you can’t make a decision, can you?”

Group discussion, female, older children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white and BME, Slough

However, the participants from minority groups did not rely on judgements of how other people might react to the words. They based their responses on their own views about the potentially offensive words.

3.3.2 Who the words were directed towards

The way that potentially discriminatory language was used in terms of who it was directed towards was also a factor in how acceptable it was considered to be. There were a number of specific considerations which participants raised during discussions of the clips.

Was the programme balanced, and was there an opportunity for the group being targeted to respond?

If the programme was considered to present an unbalanced view of a minority group, then the language used within that programme was likely to be considered less acceptable by the general UK sample. This was particularly the case when the individuals being targeted were not given an opportunity to respond or retaliate. For example, the adult satirical television comedy clip (Clip 12) was cited by some participants as an example of this.

“Cock in a frock’ and then constantly referring to his balls and shaving rash and saying he’s got hairy arms, just the whole clip we watched was a constant dig at it, from everyone, from all the characters. It was completely unbalanced, there wasn’t anyone who was on Georgina’s side [the transgender character].”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

In the radio daily magazine programme clip (Clip 14) where the word ‘retard’ is used to describe a politician’s children, one of the reasons the language was considered unacceptable was that it was aimed at an individual who has no connection with the programme or opportunity to respond.

“Especially when people weren’t there to defend themselves... [The politician] was not there and her children certainly were not there and many people with Down’s Syndrome or any other sort of disability were not there to defend themselves.”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Belfast

“Bullies and thugs will use it [‘retard’] to offend. This has got the malice.”

Depth interview, male, no children/empty nester, 55-75, ABC1, Asian, Birmingham

In contrast, the same word was used in the television adult comedy pop quiz clip (Clip 13), but here it was considered more generally acceptable by participants because it was used to a fellow guest, who could have retaliated if she found it offensive.

“She was actually there and she was laughing.”

Group discussion, female, no children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, C2DE, white,
Glasgow

This view was also expressed by some participants from some of the minority audiences. For example, some male to female transgender participants found the use of language aimed at the transgender character in the adult satirical television comedy clip (Clip 12) unacceptable because the character was not able to respond, nor was the language challenged.

“That’s the sort of language that people who don’t understand use. If at a later stage as a part of that they had actually challenged it...then that would have been much more acceptable but they never did. I couldn’t see any point in there being a trans person there other than to be the butt of those jokes and I found that totally unacceptable and offensive.”

Group discussion, male to female transgender participants, Manchester

“It would be acceptable to me to use it in a derogatory term in a drama in which someone is showing it being derogatory to a trans person, they would probably use that word and it would be appropriate because it’s showing that person being ignorant and rude to a trans person, but the drama should in some way balance that I think.”

Group discussion, male to female transgender participants, Manchester

However, others found this clip acceptable because they thought that it portrayed the characters using potentially discriminatory language as small minded so was implicitly challenging or questioning their behaviour.

“It’s highlighting the point of the idiots in terms of their viewpoints and ... and showing their small mindedness and actually the transsexual character comes out stronger than any of them.”

Group discussion, male, gay and bisexual men, London

3.3.3 How words could be interpreted / how they were used

Finally, participants from both the general UK sample and minority audiences also thought about how the words or phrases used could be interpreted, and how the specific context and sentence in which they were used affected their interpretation.

Did the word have other or broader meanings?

Words and phrases which are only or mainly used to refer to a particular group (e.g. 'spastic') were generally less acceptable to the general UK sample than other discriminatory words. This was also the case when words that can be interpreted in more than one way were used in a way that made it clear that they are referring to a specific group (e.g. the use of the word 'retarded' in Clip 14).

Participants from some of the minority audiences shared this view when discussing clips with potentially discriminatory language which could be seen to be aimed at them. They also found the use of specific terms and terms used in a way which made it clear that they were referring to a particular group less acceptable. For example, a participant who had a child with Down's Syndrome found the reference to 'Down's Syndrome' in the adult orientated sixth form comedy series (Clip 17) less acceptable because it was so specific.

"It just showed a lack of understanding, so scrutinising if you think, why use 'Down's', they could have used something else, 'special needs', which could have covered a whole host of things."

Depth interview, family member of a person with Down's Syndrome, London

Words which are less direct or have other meanings were considered more acceptable by some participants in the general UK sample. For example, opinion was divided over words such as 'gay', which some participants said had multiple meanings, two of which - 'happy' and 'homosexual' - are neither offensive nor discriminatory, whereas the other meaning ('rubbish') can be used in ways which were considered offensive and

discriminatory by some participants (when negatively associated with homosexuality). Participants' views on the word 'gay' are discussed in more detail in Section 4.

Some participants argued that the fact that these words have non-offensive meanings makes them more acceptable overall in non-discriminatory contexts. However, some thought that broadcasters should avoid using these words wherever possible because they may be interpreted as discriminatory, even if that is not the intent.

Both of these views were also expressed by gay, lesbian and bisexual participants. Some of these participants felt that it was not acceptable to use any words relating to sexual orientation (including 'gay') pre-watershed, other than in a purely factual context.

"They [presenters on the television entertainment series on cars (Clip 7)] used words like 'gay' to say something is lame or bad taste or anything. I just don't think it's right because a lot of kids are picking up on that right now, kids say that all the time 'oh that's gay, this is gay'."

Group discussion, male, gay and bisexual men, London

However, some participants thought that it was acceptable to use the word 'gay' when it is not aimed at gay people or intended to cause offence.

"'Gay' is a bit of a weird one I think because it can be used as a derogatory term, you know you go 'oh you gay' or something like that, so what but it can also be used as a definition of what it is."

Group discussion, male, gay and bisexual men, London

"'Gay' can refer to something being fabulous, 'that's really gay' or whatever, as well as maybe something is a bit fake or limp or whatever."

Group discussion, male, gay and bisexual men, London

Where discriminatory words have an additional meaning which is negative but not directly discriminatory, more participants from the general UK sample found it acceptable, provided it was used in its non-discriminatory sense. For example, the reference to 'pikey' in the clip from the television entertainment series on cars (Clip 6) was considered acceptable by many, as it is taken to mean "cheap", which was not considered an unacceptable term by many participants. However, some participants considered this usage unacceptable because it could still be interpreted as offensive by the groups being referred to.

Both of these opposing views were also expressed by some participants from some of the minority audiences when discussing the clips with potentially discriminatory language. For example, some disabled participants or their family members found the use of the word 'retard' in the television adult comedy pop quiz clip (Clip 13) acceptable because it was used in a lighthearted manner and was used in a broader sense rather than being targeted at a disabled person.

"It's not as if [the person the word was aimed at] was retarded, it was said in good faith."

Depth interview, family member of a person with Down's Syndrome, London

However, some other disabled participants disliked the use of this word in any context.

4. Main findings: Feedback on specific words

During the focus groups and interviews, participants from both the general UK sample and minority audiences were asked at the end of the discussions to consider 56 potentially offensive words. Ofcom referred to the previous research on offensive language published in 2005 for the list of potentially offensive terms and then updated this list for this research. This updated list took into consideration complaints received about offensive language from viewers and listeners since 2005.

All participants were asked to arrange the words along a scale, from 'not generally acceptable' to 'generally acceptable' for use on television only, both before and after the watershed. If a word could be interpreted in more than one way, moderators directed participants to consider its use as a discriminatory word only. However, participants also considered the use of the words in a range of contexts and debated whether they could be intended or interpreted in a non-discriminatory way.

In order to make a decision about the positioning of these words, participants from both the general UK sample and minority audiences usually referred to the principles they identified during the discussion of the clips. Given participants' views on how context affected the acceptability of different words, discussing the words in isolation was not a clear cut or easy task. However, in the context of this research, it enabled the discussion of a larger number of words and identification of similarities and differences between words. The research could not cover each word in depth, but gave a feel for audience views on each word.

As participants were asked to group the potentially offensive words towards the end of the group discussions/interviews (after discussing how individual words were used in the clips), they were influenced to a certain extent by the decisions they had already made about the individual words. However, we noted that when participants were carrying out the mapping exercise and looking at these words in isolation, they tended

to be stricter about how they rated the words. For example, when watching a television adult comedy pop quiz (Clip 13) (and applying the principles) many participants from both the general UK sample and minority audiences thought that the use of the word 'retarded' was acceptable because it was lighthearted banter which was not aimed at a disabled person. However, when thinking about the word 'retarded' in isolation, participants from both samples considered it an unacceptable word which for some should only be used with care, and for others should never be used at all.

As a result, the words in the following section have been categorised taking into account both how participants grouped them during the mapping exercise and the discussions participants had about how the individual words were used in the clips.

Participants tended to consider different principles when assessing strong language and discriminatory language, therefore the following section (which explains how the words were mapped) is divided into two main sections to reflect these differences.

4.1 Strong language

Participants were asked to consider strong language (e.g. 'fuck') and then potentially discriminatory language (e.g. 'Paki', 'retard', 'tranny'). The full lists of words covered are included in Appendices 15 and 16.

When considering general strong language, participants arranged them on a scale from 'not generally acceptable' to 'generally acceptable' for use on television, first considering pre-watershed and then post-watershed use. In both cases, words tended to fall into three groups:

- **Words with higher acceptability**

Words that were identified as generally acceptable were usually those words which participants thought could be used in a wide range of different contexts, e.g. different times of broadcast, or types of programmes.

- **Words with medium acceptability**

Words which were placed towards the middle of the scale were seen as examples where more care is required in terms of the context in which they are used.

- **Words with lower acceptability**

Words placed towards the end of the scale were either regarded as requiring a high level of care and consideration of the context used, or simply not acceptable for use on television pre-watershed.

There was no strong language which many participants considered were unacceptable for use on television post-watershed, although there were some words which many participants thought needed careful use post-watershed. There were also two words in this category which were unfamiliar to most respondents.

Whilst some words were mapped in the same position by almost all groups, there were differences of opinion about others. However, there were no substantial differences between views of general UK sample and views of minority groups – the same range of views were expressed by participants in both parts of the research sample. Given the range of views expressed on the words, they are discussed in the groups shown in the table below (both pre- and post-watershed):

Higher acceptability ↕	Group 1: Higher acceptability
	Group 2: Higher acceptability to some/medium acceptability to others
Medium acceptability ↕	Group 3: Medium acceptability
	Group 4: Medium acceptability to some/lower acceptability to others
Lower acceptability	Group 5: Lower acceptability
	Group 6: Unfamiliar words ²²

The following sections of this report explain how the words were grouped, why some words were grouped together and any differences in opinion in terms of their general acceptability across the sample.

4.1.1 Pre-watershed

Group 1: Higher acceptability

'Arse', 'Breasts', 'Bum', 'Damn', 'Tits'

During the mapping exercise participants identified several words which they thought were generally acceptable on television before the watershed.

The words 'arse', 'breasts', 'bum', 'damn' and 'tits' were all considered acceptable because they were thought to be used frequently in everyday language and are not usually used in a context which is likely to cause offence. As these words are already part of common vocabulary, most were not concerned about hearing these words on

²² Group 6 is covered once in the pre-watershed section only as familiarity was not related to the time of broadcast.

television. Also, the words 'breasts', 'bum' and 'tits' were all thought to be harmless, casual ways of referring to specific body parts.

“Breasts’ are fine, ‘bum’ is fine.... they are all part of your body.”

Group discussion, female, older children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white and BME, Slough

These words were considered acceptable pre-watershed across the sample.

Group 2: Higher acceptability to some/medium acceptability to others

‘Bloody’, ‘Bollocks’, ‘Bugger’, ‘Crap’, ‘Goddamn’, ‘Piss/pissed’

Some participants thought that the words 'bloody', 'bollocks', 'bugger', 'crap', 'goddamn' and 'piss/pissed' were acceptable to air before the watershed. Many participants felt that these words were considered generally acceptable, because they are frequently used in everyday life and are not usually used in a context which is likely to offend people.

“Because those words [‘bollocks’ and ‘crap’ etc] are used in language, they could be used in passing and don’t necessarily refer to a group of people, whereas these [other words] can be derogatory to certain people and do cause offence and most of the time they are used to cause offencebut these are just general swear words.”

Group discussion, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white and BME, London

“Pissed’ is not even a swear word is it?”

Group discussion, female, no children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, C2DE, white,
Glasgow

This view was also shared by some parents within the general UK sample.

“It’s commonly used [‘piss/pissed’], it’s a bit unfortunate but like I say it’s a sign of the times, it is commonly used and children use it at school...you hear children talk like that all the time – and worse.”

Depth interview, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white, Glasgow

“[Talking about ‘goddamn’] That’s not swearing is it?”

Depth interview, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, Asian, Birmingham

Some participants, particularly older participants, found these words more offensive, and wanted to see some care taken over their use on television before the watershed.

Group 3: Medium acceptability

‘Bitch’, ‘Bastard’, ‘Dick’, ‘Wanker’, ‘Shag’, ‘Slag’, ‘Shit’

The words ‘bitch’, ‘bastard’, ‘dick’, ‘wanker’, ‘shag’, ‘slag’ and ‘shit’ were grouped together as they were thought to be ‘stronger’ swear words. As a result, some participants thought there were some contexts in which these words would be acceptable on television pre-watershed. However they said that care needed to be taken over their use, based on the principles discussed in the previous section, particularly whether children were likely to be listening or watching and whether programmes were intended to be family viewing.

“‘Bitch’, ‘stupid cow’, ‘slut’, I think they were part of the course for that type of soap opera, I wouldn’t be over offended.”

Group discussion, male, no children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, ABC1, white, Belfast

“I don’t want my children using the word ‘shit’, I would tell my children off for that.”

Group discussion, female, older children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white and BME, Slough

Group 4: Medium acceptability to some/lower acceptability to others

'Cock', 'Twat'

The words 'cock' and 'twat' were usually grouped together, either towards the middle or lower end of the scale. Many thought that the words were often used in a lighthearted manner and not usually in a way which is likely to cause offence.

"I don't think it's offensive to call someone a 'cock'."

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

However, there were some participants who found the words 'cock' and 'twat' more offensive, particularly parents and older people (aged 55+). Some said that this was because of the sexual connotations of these words. In particular, some participants said that 'twat' was as offensive as the word 'cunt' in some areas, whereas some participants interpreted it as a strong term for 'idiot'. Some participants, particularly those with older children, were concerned about their children hearing this type of language.

"It is not a very nice word really is it..... just the way it comes across, it's quite a crude word isn't it?"

Depth interview, male, no children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white, Cardiff

Group 5: Lower acceptability

'Pussy', 'Fuck', 'Motherfucker', 'Cunt'

Words which were considered by all participants to be unacceptable before the watershed were 'cunt', 'fuck', 'mother fucker' and 'pussy'. Most participants particularly disliked the use of the word 'cunt' as it was felt to be one of the strongest and most offensive swear words.

"I think 'cunt' is probably the worst of the swear words."

Group discussion, male, no children, aged 18-30, ABC1, white, Glasgow

"I hate that word ('motherfucker'), I hate it, I don't know why I just hate it."

Group discussion, male, no children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white and BME,
Birmingham

"I'm not very keen on the 'cunt' word to be honest, I suppose using that on TV is a bit over the top I think, because I think that is probably one of the worse words people take offence from."

Depth interview, male, no children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white, Cardiff

Group 6: Unfamiliar words

'Gash'²³, 'Bloodclaat'

Many participants were not familiar with, and did not know the meaning of the word 'bloodclaat'²⁴. Some assumed that it could not be particularly offensive because they had not heard the word before. They also did not think that many people were familiar with it and would therefore be likely to 'miss it' if it was used on television.

²³ Gash' – "The vulva. Also, a woman" (derogatory, slang) [Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, sixth edition, 2007]

²⁴ 'Bloodclaat' – "Jamaican/Patois originated, meaning blood cloth and referring to menstruation" (derogatory)

“Sorry, can someone explain how it’s offensive to me because I actually don’t understand it.”

Group discussion, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white and BME, London

Many participants also did not know the meaning of the word ‘gash’ and therefore were not able to comment on how acceptable they thought this word was.

The few participants who were more aware of the meaning of the word ‘gash’ thought that it could be seen as offensive by some.

4.1.2 Post-watershed

When discussing acceptable language in a post-watershed context, there were some differences in the views of participants based on their demographic profile. The younger male group considered most strong language to be acceptable post-watershed, whereas the two older groups (55+) considered more strong language to be unacceptable post-watershed. However, it is also important to note that views on acceptability varied within the general UK sample.

Below, we discuss the broad categories that the potentially offensive words were grouped into, and the reasons for these groupings.

Group 1: Higher acceptability

‘Bitch’, ‘Bloody’, ‘Bollocks’, ‘Crap’, ‘Slag’, ‘Shit’, ‘Dick’, ‘Bugger’, ‘Goddamn’, ‘Wanker’, ‘Piss/pissed’, ‘Shag’

The words which were considered generally acceptable to use post-watershed by many participants included: ‘bitch’, ‘bloody’, ‘bollocks’, ‘crap’, ‘slag’, ‘shit’, ‘dick’, ‘bugger’, ‘goddamn’, ‘wanker’, ‘piss/pissed’ and ‘shag’. These words were grouped together because many participants thought they were equally acceptable and not as offensive as some other words, such as ‘cunt’ and ‘fuck’. Most participants thought it

was acceptable for these words to be used after the watershed as it is expected that only adults will be watching at this time.

“After nine, as an adult, the kids have gone to bed, I decide what I watch and whatever terms you want to use then I decide as I’m watching the show whether I want to watch it to the end or I want to stop watching it after five minutes because I find it totally unacceptable what kind of terminology they’re using.”

Group discussion, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white, London

The exception was some participants in the older (55-75) female group, who did not consider some of these words (particularly ‘bitch’, and ‘dick’) to be acceptable post-watershed.

Group 2: Higher acceptability to some/medium acceptability to others

‘Cock’, ‘Twat’, ‘Bastard’, ‘Shit’

Whilst some participants thought the words ‘cock’, ‘twat’, ‘shit’ and ‘bastard’ were generally acceptable, some participants felt these words were stronger and placed them in the middle of the scale in terms of acceptability post-watershed.

Those who thought these words were generally acceptable thought they were often used in a lighthearted, joking manner. These participants also thought that the words ‘cock’, ‘twat’, ‘shit’ and ‘bastard’ were not usually used in a context which is likely to cause offence.

“‘Bastard’, I don’t think you would be really offended by that.”

Group discussion, male, no children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, ABC1, white, Belfast

“I see ‘twat’ as being slightly mild.”

Group discussion, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white, London

However, some participants, particularly those with older children who were concerned about them hearing this type of language after the watershed, thought it was less acceptable to use these words on television. Some participants were also concerned that these words could be used to cause offence to others.

“Bastard’ is a bit stronger than some of the others.”

Group discussion, male, no children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, ABC1, white, Belfast

Group 3: Medium acceptability

‘Pussy’

During the post-watershed mapping exercise, the word ‘pussy’ tended to be placed in the middle of the scale of general acceptability. Some participants recognised that the word ‘pussy’ can often be used in a lighthearted, joking manner which is not intended to cause offence, but also acknowledged that it has sexual connotations and therefore could be seen as more offensive. Individual participants also had different attitudes towards the word.

“There is nothing wrong with the word ‘pussy’.”

Group discussion, female, older children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white and BME, Slough

“Pussy’ - I hate that word...it’s horrible.”

Group discussion, female, younger children, ABC1, white, Cardiff

Group 4: Medium acceptability to some/lower acceptability to others

‘Fuck’

When carrying out the mapping exercise, some participants placed the word ‘fuck’ towards the top or in the middle of the scale of general acceptability, but some participants considered it less acceptable and placed it lower down the scale. Those

who placed the word 'fuck' in the top of middle of the mapping did so because they felt it had become part of everyday language and is used commonly.

"'Fuck' is used more in the language nowadays."

Group discussion, male, no children, aged 18-30, ABC1, white group, Glasgow

"People have been using 'fuck' a lot more and it's kind of almost becoming acceptable."

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

This view was more likely to be expressed by younger participants and by men.

Some participants, particularly those aged 55 to 75, thought the word 'fuck' was more offensive, because it has sexual connotations and is sometimes used in an aggressive manner. Some also mentioned that they found the word 'fuck' even more offensive when it is used in front of other swear words.

"With 'fuck' there's a bit of nastiness – things like you 'fucking bitch'."

Depth interview, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white, Glasgow

Group 5: Lower acceptability

'Cunt', 'Motherfucker'

The words 'cunt' and 'motherfucker' which were both thought to be unacceptable before the watershed, were also considered less acceptable after the watershed. Many participants felt that both of these words were particularly offensive.

"It's ['cunt'] a very offensive word to be on TV."

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Belfast

“I just took offence at the specific word, ‘cunt’. In my house you just don’t say it.”

Group discussion, male, older children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Cardiff

However, a few participants did not feel as strongly as others about the usage of this word after the watershed, particularly some male participants.

“I don’t find ‘cunt’ any more unacceptable than ‘fuck’.”

Group discussion, male, gay and bisexual men, London

[Talking about the use of ‘cunt’ in the adult-orientated television sitcom (Clip 11)] *“Totally acceptable that’s what you would expect from that channel...it’s just part of the comedy so it’s fine.”*

Group discussion, male, no children, aged 18-30, ABC1, white, Glasgow

4.2. Potentially discriminatory language

This section focuses on the potentially discriminatory language in isolation as participants from both the general UK sample and minority groups tended to consider different issues when assessing discriminatory language.

When participants were mapping the discriminatory words, they tended to make decisions about these words based on how socially acceptable they believed they were, and how familiar they were with the words personally. In this context, whether the words were used pre or post-watershed was less of a consideration in determining their acceptability. There were some words which some participants from both the general UK sample and minority groups considered should never be used on television, whereas other participants wanted particular care to be taken over the context in which they were used. This is discussed in relation to the specific words below, where relevant.

Whilst some words were mapped in the same position by many participants within the general UK sample, other words were particularly polarising, with some participants considering them completely acceptable and others considering them completely unacceptable. These differences in opinion were driven by a wide range of issues, including their understanding of the specific terms and personal experience. As a result, there are no clear demographic trends within the general UK sample relating to these words.

There were also differences between the views of general UK sample and the views of minority groups when considering words which could be seen to discriminate against them as individuals.

In the following sections of the report, the potentially discriminatory words are discussed within five overall groups. Within each group, some words are discussed separately if appropriate i.e. if the views expressed about this word were distinct from the views expressed about any other word.

The groupings in this section of the report are based on the views of the general UK sample. This section also provides details of the views of the minority groups. The table below sets out how the groups are defined.

	Familiarity with the words	
Perceptions of the social acceptability of the words	Group 1: Well known and seen as socially acceptable	Group 2: Less well known and seen as socially acceptable by those who knew them
	Group 3: Well known and seen as less socially acceptable	Group 4: Less well known and seen as less socially acceptable by those who knew them
	Group 5: Polarising words	

Within the discussion of each specific word or group of words, the report therefore covers:

- How the words were viewed by the general UK sample, with opposing views from within the general UK sample where relevant;
- Why some words were grouped together; and
- The opinions expressed by minority groups where they differed from those of the general sample.

Details on the views of the individual minority audiences are collated in Appendix 2.

4.2.1 Group 1: Well known and seen as socially acceptable (general UK sample)

‘Nutter’, ‘Looney’, ‘Mental’, ‘Lezza’, ‘Poof’, ‘Queer’, ‘Jesus Christ’

‘Nutter’, ‘Looney’, ‘Mental’

Participants from the general UK sample mapped a number of words together which they were familiar with and believed to be socially acceptable. The words ‘nutter’, ‘looney’ and ‘mental’ were grouped together by the participants because they were familiar words which are commonly used, most often in a lighthearted manner. Many

participants described these words as 'playground language' and thought they were often used to mean 'silly' or 'stupid'. They said that these words are also not usually used in an offensive manner and were therefore considered socially acceptable by most if used in this type of context.

"That ['mental'] is just an everyday word now it does not mean anything."

Group discussion, male, no children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white and BME,
Birmingham

Most disabled participants in this research study did not feel personally offended by the words 'mental', 'looney', or 'nutter' as they felt these words were usually used in a lighthearted manner and were harmless. None of these words were considered as derogatory and harmful as the word 'retard' by disabled participants.

"I have been hearing those words ('nutter' and 'looney') for years...they are just humorous adjectives, they don't mean anything horrible."

Depth interview, person with a mental health condition, London

'Lezza', 'Poof', 'Queer'

The words 'lezza', 'poof' and 'queer' were also grouped together by many participants in the general UK sample as they could all be used to describe someone's sexual orientation and are familiar/well known words. Many participants saw these words as socially acceptable because they are commonly used in society and are thought to be used in a lighthearted/banter manner, without aggression or intent to offend. Many participants also did not think gay people would be offended by these words, and therefore thought that this made these words more acceptable than some of the other words covered in the research e.g. 'homo' and 'faggot'.

“Queer’ is probably the nicest way of putting it.”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

However, based on the earlier discussion on the clips, it is likely that views on these words would vary based in particular on the intent with which they were used. These findings are based on participants’ assumption that the context would usually be lighthearted, but earlier discussions suggest that some participants would take a different view if these words were used aggressively or to target an individual.

The views of some of the gay, lesbian and bisexual participants in this research differed from those of the general UK sample. For example, some gay and lesbian participants were concerned about the words ‘queer’ and ‘poof’ being used in a derogatory context and thought that it could be seen to be offensive if used in this way.

“If it’s used in a derogatory thing then it’s probably not (acceptable).”

Group discussion, male, gay and bisexual men, London

“There are certain words - like the word ‘poof’ is definitely always going to be a derogatory term.”

Group discussion, male, gay and bisexual men, London

‘Jesus Christ’

The phrase ‘Jesus Christ’ was also considered generally acceptable by many across both the general UK sample and minority groups, because it is frequently used in everyday life and not usually used in a context which is likely to offend people.

4.2.2 Group 2: Less well known and seen as socially acceptable by those who knew them (general UK sample)

'Homo', 'Gender-bender', 'Chick with a dick', 'Tranny'

'Homo', 'Gender-bender', 'Chick with a dick'

The words 'homo', 'gender-bender' and 'chick with a dick' were grouped together by participants in the general UK sample because they were slightly less well known, and relate to sexual orientation or gender identity²⁵. These words were all thought to be used primarily in a lighthearted/banter manner and were therefore considered more socially acceptable. As the phrases 'gender-bender' and 'chick with a dick' rhyme, some participants expected them to be used in comedies, in a lighthearted way, and therefore thought it was unlikely that these phrases could be seen to be offensive.

"'Chick with a dick' and those others ('gender-bender' etc.) are more acceptable as adult humour."

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

"It's more comedy though ['chick with a dick'], it's not as hard hitting."

Group discussion, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, white, Cardiff

"'Gender-bender' - it's nothing really nasty is it?"

Group discussion, female, no children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, C2DE, white,
Glasgow

"[About 'homo'] That's quite acceptable, it's just a shortened word for homosexual isn't it?"

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

²⁵ See footnote 3.

However, based on the earlier discussion on the clips, it is likely that views on these words would vary based in particular on the intent with which they were used. These findings are based on participants' assumption that the context would usually be lighthearted, but earlier discussions suggest that some participants would take a different view if these words were used aggressively or to target an individual.

When viewed in isolation, some transgender participants found the phrases 'gender-bender' and 'chick with a dick' acceptable. However, some gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender participants became more concerned when they thought the phrases were being used to reinforce transphobic stereotypes e.g. during comedies. Therefore, the extent to which these phrases were considered acceptable depends upon the context in which they were being used.

"Providing there is some comeback or a challenge (talking together) it's not the language that is a problem, it's the use of the person as the butt of the jokes."

Group discussion, male to female transsexual participants, Manchester

"But don't you think, though, by people using phrases like this it makes it more acceptable in society because it's not offensive, it's just like 'yeah, chick with a dick'."

Group discussion, female, lesbian and bisexual women, Manchester

Some transgender participants found these phrases amusing on a personal level, provided they were not being used with malicious intent. These participants felt that objecting to them on a general level would be an over-reaction that could harm the reputation of the transgender community.

“If it’s done maliciously then I jump on it but otherwise I find the transgirls are their own worst enemy... ‘you can’t say this, you can’t say that, I want this, I want that’...”

Group discussion, male to female transsexual participants, Manchester

“‘Gender bender’. you see, it’s the sort of thing that can be used affectionately.”

Depth interview, female to male transsexual participant, Manchester

The female to male transsexual participant found phrases like ‘cock in a frock’ and ‘chick with a dick’ less acceptable, because they focussed attention on the presence or absence of the penis, rather than on the wider issues surrounding transgender people.

‘Tranny’

With regard to the word ‘tranny’, some participants in the general UK sample were not familiar with the term and therefore found it difficult to comment on this word.

Most participants from the general UK sample who were more aware of the meaning of ‘tranny’ did not find it personally offensive, and were not sure how offensive transgender people would find it.

“I don’t personally know any transgender, transsexual people...I’m sure it’s something they hear a lot of, not that that makes it acceptable immediately but obviously it was used for comedy effect in the programme. I didn’t find it particularly funny but I didn’t find it offensive.”

Depth interview, female, older children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white, Belfast

Many transgender participants believed that the use of the word ‘tranny’ was unacceptable in most circumstances, often comparing it to the word ‘nigger’. Whilst it was a word they used themselves, they objected to its use on television. This was because participants believed it is a throw away term, which can belittle transgender people. They also said that it was often used incorrectly. They pointed out that the

word means 'cross dresser' and that it is incorrect to use it to describe a transgender person.

"It's very much like the word 'nigger', black people can use that between themselves but if someone uses it, particularly in a derogatory way it is very offensive and that was used in a derogatory way."

Group discussion, male to female transsexual participants, Manchester

"[It's] probably not acceptable as good humoured banter if it's not a trans person saying it. Yeah, I have problems with that."

Depth interview, female to male transsexual participant, Manchester

4.2.3 Group 3: Well known and seen as less socially acceptable (general UK sample)

'Nigger', 'Paki', 'Spastic', 'Dyke' 'Faggot'

'Nigger' and 'Paki'

The words 'nigger' and 'Paki' were often grouped together because they were known to be racist words which were perceived by many participants (both white and BME) to generally be used in an offensive and discriminatory context. Most participants felt that these words were the two strongest, most discriminatory words discussed.

"The only really, really bad ones are 'Paki' and 'nigger'."

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

"'Nigger' and 'Paki'...those are ones that offend specific minority groups."

Group discussion, male, older children, Aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Cardiff

Although the words 'nigger' and 'Paki' were grouped together, some participants noted that there were some differences in the way in which these words are used and interpreted. Some white participants thought that black people may find it acceptable to refer to another black person as 'nigger' and therefore thought that it was acceptable for the word 'nigger' to be used in this way.

"It's alright for a black person to call a black person that but you couldn't have a white person calling a black person that."

Group discussion, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, white, Cardiff

Participants also noted that the word 'nigger' is commonly used in rap songs and is not seen as unacceptable in this context.

"I don't disagree [that 'nigger' is potentially a very offensive word to use] but it's used in rap music and stuff like that, it's used all the time."

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

Despite discussing these differences in the way in which the words are used in society or in other media, many participants from the general UK sample strongly felt that it was not acceptable to use the words in a context where it could be interpreted as derogatory on television.

"They ('Paki' and 'nigger') are specifically picking out people in society, it's not exactly swearing, and they just shouldn't be allowed."

Depth interview, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white, Glasgow

However, there were differences in opinion within the general UK sample in terms of their use in a 'real life' context to highlight a social issue (e.g. racial bullying). Some participants thought it was acceptable to use the words 'nigger' and 'Paki' on television

when the words were being used to demonstrate/educate that it is wrong to use these words in this way. However, some thought even in this context it was unacceptable to use this language on television because it could be seen to encourage or legitimise use of the words in wider society.

Participants from BME communities had similar views about the use of potentially offensive racist language on television as the white participants. As with the white sample, they fell into two groups in terms of their views on the use of the words 'nigger' and 'Paki' on television. Some BME participants objected to the use of these words on television at all, because they considered them highly offensive and wanted to ensure that their use is not promoted on television, even if used in an educational context.

"No, with the way things are today there is no need to show anything like that [clip which used the word 'nigger' (Clip 9)] on the TV, you are just throwing fuel on the fire."

Depth interview, female, no children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, C2DE, Afro-Caribbean, Cardiff

"I don't think that should have been used in any way. It's offensive, yes that is the sort of words you just don't use, not on TV and especially not on that TV programme that is not acceptable definitely... That should not be on TV under any circumstances."

Depth interview, male, older children, aged 30-55, C2DE, Afro-Caribbean, London

However, some found the use of potentially offensive racist language acceptable if it was used to make a moral point or to educate viewers and listeners about its negative impact.

“If you are going to use it educationally, you have to have a very good reason to do that.”

Depth interview, male, older children, aged 30-55 C2DE, Afro-Caribbean, London

Some also commented that the ethnicity of the person using the word made a difference to its acceptability.

“[For] us to use the word ‘nigger’ for black to black that’s fine because we are the same skin and everything but for a different race like for a white person says to you ‘nigger’, it’s not.”

Depth interview, male, no children, aged 18-30, ABC1, Afro-Caribbean, Belfast

In some cases participants from BME communities were upset by seeing discriminatory language used in ways that reminded them of specific experiences where they or their children were discriminated against using those phrases. However, this did not necessarily mean that they considered the clips offensive. Although they found the clips personally upsetting and affecting, some still supported the use of the language to educate others.

“I think in my situation it’s maybe different, because I was really upset when I watched it [clip in which ‘Paki’ was used (Clip 3)] because my children used to come home and say – adults even swore at them...I’m not saying they shouldn’t put it on, it should be shown that this is what goes on.”

Group discussion, female, no children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, C2DE, white,
Glasgow

(N.B. This participant was married to a Pakistani man and described her children as ‘Scottish Pakistanis’)

'Spastic'

The word 'spastic' was seen as a derogatory term which relates to disabled people. When thinking about this word in isolation, many participants from the general UK sample did not think that it was acceptable to use it on television, as it singles out people in society and is extremely harmful and upsetting.

"'Spaz' and 'spacca', 'spastic' - they are really bad."

Group discussion, female, older children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white and BME, Slough

"'Spastic' and 'retard', I don't think they become acceptable post-watershed."

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

Disabled participants and the families of disabled people were also more offended by the word 'spastic' if it had been used against them or their relatives in a derogatory way.

"Because they used to use it at school all the time like they use 'gay' now and it's an insult and it conjures up, 'my sister is a spastic' so it's not very nice."

Depth interview, family member of person with a learning disability, London

"'Spastic' and 'cripple' - I took those words out [of the word sort]. They can affect me, I don't like those words."

Depth interview, person with mobility difficulties, Manchester

"You need to be very careful with that [spastic]."

Depth interview, person with a mental health condition, London

'Dyke', 'Faggot'

Many participants from the general UK sample grouped the words 'dyke' and 'faggot' together as they were both known to be derogatory terms which are used to refer to gay people. Most participants were aware that the word 'dyke' is often used to refer to gay women, whereas the word 'faggot' is used to refer to gay men. Both of these words were considered to be equally offensive, as they are both used in the same way to insult gay people. The general UK sample thought that the words 'dyke' and 'faggot' were considered more hurtful and serious than words such as 'tranny' and 'poof' which were felt to be used in more of a lighthearted way.

"I would put 'dyke' with 'faggot' because it would be offensive to people."

Group discussion, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, white, Cardiff

"'Faggot' can be used in a lighthearted way but it's more of an insult really."

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

Gay, lesbian and bisexual participants also said that the words 'faggot' and 'dyke' were more likely to be used as an insult, and therefore found these words more offensive than other words which are used to refer to their sexual orientation (e.g. 'gay'). In context, they said they would consider these words to be acceptable if they were being used to make an educational point or in a realistic drama, but not in a comedy context.

[Comparing the use of 'Paki' in the teenage-orientated television soap (Clip 3) to the to the use of 'homo' or 'faggot' in the same context] *"If it was a guy and he was robbing him and he was calling him a 'homo' or a 'faggot' in exactly the same way I wouldn't be offended because I'd think that's feeding into what he is as a character, you need to have that insight into where his mind is."*

Group discussion, male, gay and bisexual men, London

4.2.4 Group 4: Less well known and seen as less socially acceptable by those who knew them (general UK sample)

'Schizo', 'Chink', 'Yid', 'Mong', 'Fenian', 'Towelhead', 'Hun', 'Nazi'

There were a number of discriminatory words which many participants, across both the general UK sample and minority groups, were not aware of, and did not know the meaning of or did not understand how they were offensive. These words included 'schizo'²⁶, 'Chink'²⁷, 'Yid'²⁸, 'mong'²⁹, 'Fenian'³⁰, 'towelhead'³¹, and 'Hun'³².

As discussed in Section 3.3.1 earlier, if participants did not know the meaning of these words, most were not able to make a decision during the groups/interviews about how acceptable they were, or did not find them offensive and did not think that others would find them offensive because they were not aware of what they relate to and the context in which they might be used.

²⁶ 'Schizo' – "abbreviation of schizophrenic" [Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, sixth edition, 2007]

²⁷ 'Chink' – "a Chinese person" (slang, offensive) [Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, sixth edition, 2007]

²⁸ 'Yid' – "a Jew" (slang, chiefly derogatory and offensive) [Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, sixth edition, 2007]

²⁹ 'Mong'/'Mongoloid' – "a person with Down's Syndrome" (offensive) [Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, sixth edition, 2007]

³⁰ 'Fenian' – "one of the names of the ancient population of Ireland" [Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, sixth edition, 2007]. Also used in a derogatory way to refer to Roman Catholics.

³¹ 'Towelhead' - "a person who wears a head-cloth or turban" (slang, offensive) [Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, sixth edition, 2007]

³² 'Hun' – "chiefly during the First World War: a German" (slang, derogatory) [Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, sixth edition, 2007]. Also used in a derogatory way to refer to Protestants (especially in Northern Ireland) and Rangers football fans (especially in Scotland).

“Schizo’...I think that would just go over people’s heads.”

Group discussion, male, no children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, ABC1, white, Belfast

However, there were a few participants who were aware of some of these words, and also some participants who were able to guess how to interpret the word e.g. in relation to ‘Hun’ and ‘Fenian’. Their views are discussed below.

‘Schizo’, ‘Chink’

The few participants from the general UK sample who did know the meaning of ‘schizo’ or ‘Chink’³³ believed that they were less socially acceptable than many of the other discriminatory words. This was because they have specific meanings to do with particular groups of people, rather than broader or other meanings, so participants who knew the words thought they were more likely to be used in an offensive, derogatory way to single out people in society.

“Schizo’ - it would be offensive to somebody who is psychologically ill.”

Group discussion, male, older children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Cardiff

Disabled participants (and those with disabled family members) felt that the acceptability of the word ‘schizo’ depended upon the context in which they were used.

“You can’t generalise (when talking about the words ‘schizo’ and ‘cripple’) it’s not like a generic thing.”

Depth interview, family member of person with a learning disability, London

These participants thought that if the words were used in a lighthearted way to mean ‘silly’ or ‘mixed up’ they were generally acceptable. However, they thought it was

³³ The BME sample did not include any Chinese participants so their views are not represented in this report.

unacceptable for the word 'schizo' to be used in a more aggressive context which was intended to single out people with mental health conditions or physical disabilities and cause offence or embarrassment.

"I know some people will call somebody a 'schizo' but they just mean they are mixed up, they are not saying it in that horrible way."

Depth interview, family member of person with a mental health condition, London

'Hun' and 'Fenian'

Although the majority of the general UK sample were not familiar with the words 'Fenian' and 'Hun' and therefore did not find them offensive, some participants in Glasgow were more familiar with them and said they were sometimes used in a derogatory way at football matches. Some of these participants thought that they could be seen as offensive in a religious way.

"'Hun' and 'Fenian' are really offensive and cause a lot of trouble, they are like, Catholic and Protestants."

Depth interview, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white, Glasgow

'Towelhead'

Although the word 'towelhead' was unknown to many participants and most therefore did not find it offensive, a few participants made guesses about what they thought this word could mean. If they identified it as a word relating to a particular ethnic group, some participants placed it alongside other words they considered to be racist.

"Is it a reference to Sikhs?"

Group discussion, male, no children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white and BME, Birmingham

"I'm assuming [we should put that] in the same sort of place as those others, because they're racist [words]."

Group discussion, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, white, Cardiff

'Nazi'

Most participants' main association with the word 'Nazi' was its use in a factual context. They were not able to think of a context in which the word 'Nazi' could be considered potentially offensive. However, there were some participants who spontaneously mentioned that it could be directed towards an individual and in such instances they thought it could be offensive.

"Nazi", you hear that word all the time, but it's not directly aimed at anyone."

Depth interview, female, no children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Glasgow

"It's not a word that you can't use but you shouldn't be calling people 'Nazis'."

Group discussion, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white and BME, London

'Yid', 'Mong'

The words 'Yid' and 'mong' were grouped together as not many participants were aware of the meaning of either of these words. However, the few participants who did know what they meant, believed that they were offensive terms. Those who knew the meaning of the word 'mong' felt that it should be grouped with the word 'retard', as both words are used to relate to disabled people, and are often used in an offensive, derogatory manner.

"Mong" should be put with 'retard'."

Group discussion, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, white, Cardiff

Most participants did not know the meaning of the word 'Yid' so were unable to comment on how offensive they thought it was during the group/interview.

4.2.5 Group 5: Polarising words (general UK sample)

'Retarded', 'Gyppo', 'Pikey', 'Cripple'

There were mixed responses to the words 'retarded', 'gyppo', 'pikey', and 'cripple' as participants' understanding of, and familiarity with, these words varied greatly, both within the general UK sample, and between the general UK sample and the minority groups.

'Retard/ed'

During the word sort exercise, many participants from the general UK sample interpreted the words 'retard' and 'retarded' as derogatory terms which related to disabled people. When thinking about these words in isolation, many participants did not think that it was acceptable to use these words on television, as they single out people in society and are extremely harmful and upsetting.

"'Retarded' - I never want to hear that word."

Group discussion, male, no children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, ABC1, white group,
Belfast

Views differed to some extent when considering the use of the word in context, for example, in television adult comedy pop quiz (Clip 13) where the word 'retarded' was used. Whilst some found the use of the word 'retarded' acceptable in this context, some did not. Those who held this view did not think that it was acceptable to use this word at all, even in comedy programmes where it was not intended to personally offend individuals, as it could still offend disabled people.

“Retard’ is a word that should be banned.”

Group discussion, female, lesbian and bisexual women, Manchester

“I think the only thing that may be offensive is the word ‘retard’ because it’s derogatory to mentally disabled people. The other words are just swear words whereas that isn’t really.”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

Some disabled participants and their family members found the word ‘retarded’ personally unacceptable and upsetting in more contexts than the general UK sample. This was particularly the case if this word had been used against them or their family members in the past.

“I don’t like the word ‘retard’. That offends me really, that would offend me... Cos of my condition [a mobility difficulty], things like that really. At school they called me names, it’s quite a hurtful name that.”

Depth interview, person with mobility difficulties, Manchester

“My son has got Asperger’s... he would have been really upset, he hates being called ‘retarded’ and the kids at his old school used to call him ‘retarded’ and he’s also got very bad dyslexia and dyspraxia.”

Depth interview, family member of person with a learning disability, London

Some disabled participants also found the word ‘retarded’ unacceptable in the context of a comedy programme, as demonstrated in the following quotation relating to the television adult comedy pop quiz (Clip 13).

“They’re not [aiming the word at someone with a disability] but it was unnecessary I’m sorry but there are other words you could have used.”

Depth interview, family member of a person with a learning disability, London

Although some did not think that it was acceptable to use the word ‘retarded’ on television, some participants thought that the word ‘retarded’ had changed in meaning over time, and was now frequently used to mean ‘silly’ or ‘stupid’ and used in a lighthearted way. As a result, some considered it acceptable to use the word ‘retarded’ when referring to someone who was not physically or mentally disabled, particularly in the context of a comedy.

“Over the years the word ‘retarded’ has changed from meaning disabled and whatever and it means like ‘stupid.’”

Group discussion, male, no children, aged 18-30, ABC1, white, Glasgow

“You might say it to someone who isn’t but you wouldn’t say it to someone who is.”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white and BME,
Birmingham

Whilst the disabled participants in the research study thought it was unacceptable for the word ‘retarded’ to be used in a context which is intended to cause offence, some were also aware that the word has changed in meaning over the years and thought it was acceptable to use the word in a lighthearted way to mean ‘silly’ or ‘stupid’.

“It (‘retarded’) wasn’t said in an offensive way [in Clip 13], I think that it is acceptable.”

Depth interview, person with a mental health condition, London

“Retarded’ could possibly upset people....but I wouldn’t personally find that offensive.”

Depth interview, family member of person with a mental health condition, London

‘Pikey’

Participants from the general UK sample had a wide range of reactions to the use of the word ‘pikey’, depending on their knowledge of what the word means. Some had never heard of the word and therefore were unable to comment about how acceptable they thought it was.

Some had heard the word being used before, but understood it only to mean ‘cheap’. These participants thought that it was generally acceptable to use this word, because they did not know its original meaning or its implications, and therefore assumed that the word ‘pikey’ would only ever be used in a lighthearted way to mean ‘cheap’. Also, there were some who had heard the word ‘pikey’ and were aware that it was used as a word for travellers, but did not know that it is considered derogatory or racist by some.

“Pikey’ is an everyday word, it’s not like the other words to me, oh here comes the ‘pikey’ selling the pegs, it’s an everyday word I would use.”

Group discussion, male, older children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Cardiff

However, a number of participants knew that the word ‘pikey’ is used to refer to travellers and some considered it to be derogatory.

“I have heard ‘pikey’ and I know it’s a derogatory term, I think it’s an Irish person, a traveller.”

Group discussion, female, older children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, C2DE, white,
Glasgow

“The term ‘pikey’ is an offensive word, I went to school with travellers, even ‘gypsy’ is not a good word to some travellers.”

Depth interview, family member of a person with mobility difficulties, London

However, some participants who knew what this word meant did not find it particularly offensive, as they felt that this word only related to a relatively small community and therefore thought it was more acceptable to use this word.

“My view as well is that the travelling community in England, I am assuming [is] very small, compared to say the Asian population or the black population, so when we are thinking about our children watching it or older people watching it, etc., yes it is offensive, but it is offensive to a very small minority of people within the country, and we don’t know how offended they will be by it.”

Group discussion, female, older children, aged 30-55, ABC1, white and BME, Slough

Some participants were aware of the word ‘pikey’ and that it can be used as a derogatory term for travellers, and also found it offensive themselves. These participants would prefer the word ‘pikey’ not to be used at all on television.

“I know the word ‘pikey’ means to insult poor travellers so I think it shouldn’t be used at all.”

Depth interview, male, no children, aged 18-30, ABC1, Afro-Caribbean, Belfast

Most travellers in this research study said that they personally felt that the word ‘pikey’ was an offensive, derogatory term and did not think it should be used on television. However, some travellers were aware that the word ‘pikey’ was often used nowadays to mean ‘cheap’, and thought that it was acceptable for this word to be used in a gentle, lighthearted context. For example, some travellers (particularly males) thought that the reference to the word ‘pikey’ on the factual entertainment programme about

cars (Clip 6) was acceptable, because it was a pun (i.e. the images of the pie and key) and they found it funny.

“It doesn’t bother me, that one.”

Group discussion, male, travellers, London

“He never said the word. I didn’t mind it.”

Group discussion, male, travellers, London

‘Gyppo’

As with ‘pikey’, participants from the general UK sample had mixed views on the word ‘gyppo’. Most participants knew that the word ‘gyppo’ was used to mean ‘travellers’, but some considered this word to be more offensive than others.

Some participants thought that the word ‘gyppo’ had developed other meanings over the years and was now frequently used to mean ‘cheap’ (as with ‘pikey’). These participants thought that it was acceptable to use the word ‘gyppo’ in a lighthearted context which was not intended to cause offence.

However, some participants believed that the word ‘gyppo’ was offensive to travellers and thought that this word should be used with care, or not at all.

Some travellers in this research study were personally offended by the use of this word and did not think it should be used. However, some travellers thought that it was acceptable if it is used in a context which is not directly aimed at or used to offend them.

‘Cripple’

Participants from the general UK sample also had mixed reactions towards the use of the word ‘cripple’. As with ‘retard’, some were aware that this word can be used to

refer to disabled people in a derogatory manner, and therefore did not think that it was socially acceptable.

“You can’t call someone a ‘cripple’.”

Group discussion, male, younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, white and BME, London

However, some participants believed that the meaning of this word had changed over time, and was now used in a more lighthearted, harmless way and therefore not considered to be offensive or harmful.

‘Gay’

Within the general UK sample, opinion was divided over the use of the word ‘gay’ outside an explicit discriminatory context. Many participants saw this word as socially acceptable because it was commonly used in society and was thought to be used in a lighthearted/banter manner, without aggression or intent to offend. Some also said that the word had multiple meanings, two of which - ‘happy’ and ‘homosexual’ - were neither offensive nor discriminatory, whereas the other meaning (‘rubbish’) can be used in ways which were considered offensive and discriminatory by some participants (when negatively associated with homosexuality).

Many participants also thought that gay people would not be offended by ‘gay’, and therefore thought that this made this word more acceptable than some of the other words covered in the research e.g. ‘homo’ and ‘faggot’.

“Gay people want to be called ‘gay’, they call themselves ‘gay’.”

Group discussion, female, younger children, aged 20-45, ABC1, white, Cardiff

However, based on the earlier discussion on the clips, it was the case that views on these words varied based in particular on the intent with which they were used. These findings were based on participants’ assumption that the context would usually be

lighthearted, but earlier discussions suggested that some participants would take a different view if these words were used aggressively or to target an individual. A small number of participants felt that using 'gay' to mean that something was rubbish was an offensive term as it drew a link between homosexuality and something being rubbish. They thought that for this reason it should not be used on television at any time. Some felt that using language of this type on television encouraged it to be used in this way and that television should set a higher standard rather than merely reflecting language as it is used today.

"It ['gay'] wasn't used in a nice way because he was talking about a car and saying it was rubbish and then referring to it as 'gay' makes it seem like people like that are gay, rubbish and bad and all that."

Depth interview, female, no children, aged 18-30, C2DE, white, Glasgow

Gay, lesbian and bisexual participants also had mixed views about the use of the word 'gay' on television. Some participants did not think it was acceptable to use the word 'gay' in anything other than a purely descriptive manner because they found it personally offensive and believed it promoted the use of potentially homophobic terms. These participants thought broadcasters should set higher standards with regards to the use of the word 'gay', as they did not feel it was acceptable to use any words relating to sexual orientation (including 'gay') pre-watershed other than in a purely factual context.

"I think it incites homophobia, it makes homophobia acceptable in a very minor way but it feeds in, it constantly feeds in. I had friends who were gay bashed last year in London, central London, it just doesn't make me feel very comfortable seeing it on TV in a negative way."

Group discussion, male, gay and bisexual men, London

On the other hand, some gay, lesbian and bisexual participants thought that it was acceptable to use the word 'gay' to mean homosexual in a potentially pejorative manner when it is not aimed at gay people or intended to cause offence. These participants did not think that the word 'gay' was as offensive as many other words which can be used to single people out and discriminate against people in society (e.g. 'Paki'), and were therefore not concerned about the use of this word.

"Well I'm gay and I don't find it offensive."

Group discussion, female, lesbian and bisexual women, Manchester

When considering the other possible uses of the word 'gay', some gay male participants found the use of 'gay' in the television entertainment series on cars (Clip 7) unacceptable, arguing that it would not be acceptable to draw a link between a racist word and the idea that something is 'rubbish'. They thought that, although the way in which the word was used was not directly derogatory, it was still offensive. This was an area where they believed broadcasters should set higher standards than society, and they did not feel timing or channel should be considered. Some said that the use of 'gay' to mean 'bad' or 'effeminate' had become commonplace and was now a generally acceptable alternative meaning of the word.

"'Gay' in this country would just mean fabulously stylish to most of the gay men that I know so I don't think they'd be offended."

Group discussion, female, lesbian and bisexual women, Manchester

"I love [the entertainment show about cars] as I said but they used words like gay to say something is lame or bad taste or anything I just don't think it's right because a lot of kids are picking up on that right now, kids say that all the time 'oh that's gay, this is gay'."

Group discussion, male, gay and bisexual men, London

5. Main findings: The watershed, responsibility and freedom of expression

5.1 The watershed

Data from Ofcom's 2009 Media Tracker showed that 91% of people were aware of the existence of the watershed on television and the majority of those who were aware also knew that it was from 9pm (88%).

During the discussion of some of the clips, some participants from both the general UK sample and minority audiences spontaneously raised concerns about the current watershed timings. These concerns primarily related to programmes with strong language broadcast from 9pm on Friday and Saturday evenings. Both parents and non-parents said that older children stay up later on Friday and Saturday evenings, so they are more likely to hear potentially offensive language in programmes shown post-watershed on those evenings. As a result, some participants suggested that the watershed should be extended to 10pm or 11pm to protect children.

"I think on a Friday night the watershed needs to be a bit later because people do allow their children to stay up."

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Belfast

Some participants also suggested that the watershed should be 'staggered' around children's bedtimes e.g. no potentially offensive language at all before 6.30/7pm, some higher to medium potentially offensive language allowed between 6.30/7pm and 10pm, and strong potentially offensive language only allowed after 10pm or 11pm.

"I think there should be two watersheds, there should be one like 9pm now, and another one that comes in at 11pm."

Group discussion, male, older children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Cardiff

Data from Ofcom's 2009 Media Tracker relating to the timing of the watershed showed that, without being prompted with specific clips, 15% of respondents said that the watershed is too or far too early. Given the nature of the stimulus material used in this qualitative research, more concerns were expressed about the time of the watershed.

Some participants also assumed that the watershed applied to radio as well as television. This became clear during discussion of the radio interview with John Lennon (Clip 15), which was originally broadcast at 9am. Some participants spontaneously suggested that the interview should have been broadcast after the watershed. This was primarily driven by a sense that 9am was too early for the language used in this clip ('fuck' and 'bastard'), rather than concern that children might be listening, and an expectation that strong language will only be broadcast after 9pm or later, depending on the specific words used.

5.2 Responsibility

During the discussion of the clips, some participants from both the general UK sample and minority audiences spontaneously expressed some views relating to responsibility for preventing offence. Some parents said that they expect to have to take some responsibility for what their children watch on television before the watershed, particularly early evening programmes which are designed for adults but watched by children. Some non-parents also shared their view that parents should take some responsibility for their children's viewing before 9pm.

"I think parents have a responsibility as well...I was never allowed to watch Coronation Street when I was growing up it was when it was ... the Ken Barlow story line and Deidre was having an affair with Mike Baldwin."

Group discussion, female, lesbian and bisexual women, Manchester

“I think again most children have televisions in their rooms and they can switch on what they want, you can’t be in every child’s room...But then that’s about the parents’ responsibility and disciplining their children.”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Belfast

However, parents and non-parents also expected broadcasters to take responsibility for ensuring that the content broadcast is in line with audience expectations. Parents in particular were worried about being ‘caught out’ by unexpectedly strong language used during early evening programmes.

“It’s up to us as parents to decide whether we allow our children to be sat in front of the TV after 9, it’s our job to monitor what is going on, I have more of an issue with the stuff that’s before 9, at the end of the day I don’t think you should have to guard your TV.”

Group discussion, male, older children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Cardiff

These findings were in line with Ofcom’s 2009 Media Tracker, which showed that around half of respondents believed that parents are primarily responsible for making sure that children do not see unsuitable programmes, and 45% of respondents believed that parents and broadcasters are jointly responsible. Only 3% of respondents said that the responsibility lies mainly with broadcasters.

As discussed in the earlier sections, participants also expressed views about other aspects of broadcaster responsibility. They had particular concerns about instances when they believed broadcasters have made an active choice to air material which did not fit with audience expectations, particularly if they believed the broadcaster had made this choice in order to gain publicity or press coverage. They also expected broadcasters to act quickly to stop the broadcasting of unexpected strong language e.g. during a live show, and apologise quickly.

There was relatively little spontaneous discussion about Ofcom's role in relation to ensuring that the language used on television and radio is generally acceptable.

5.3 Freedom of expression

In terms of freedom of expression, whilst participants often had strong views about the context in which strong language is acceptable or unacceptable, there were relatively few suggestions that particular words should never be used on television or radio during the discussion of the clips. Indeed, some participants spontaneously expressed concern about the idea that specific words were banned from use or that there are restrictive rules about the use of language on television or radio. Those who expressed that view were concerned about the idea of restricting the kind of content available on television and radio, and would have preferred to see judgement applied based on the time of broadcast, channel and broader context.

“BBC One has the very straight down the line ‘we will not curse, we will do everything in a kind of rigid format’. Whereas I think Channel 4 and... BBC Two now has more of a reputation for it being a bit roguish and trying to push the boundaries a wee bit. Which is all good as well because adults do watch TV and they don't want a nanny state.”

Group discussion, female, no children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Belfast

“The programme is aimed at adults and...freedom of speech in this country exists therefore we can't restrict what people say.”

Group discussion, female, lesbian and bisexual women, Manchester

“The whole thing about television is that it's a portrayal of life and you cannot lose that otherwise you might as well have screening of anything that goes out in any media source... There is always the off button and it is there and just get over it.”

Group discussion, male to female transgender participants, Manchester

“The trouble these days is a lot of these words are not politically correct and to use that word [‘retard’] doesn’t sound quite right, but for me, if you watch that programme [adult comedy pop quiz (Clip 13)], you are only watching it for the banter, and they are going to throw words in like that, you have got nobody sitting there saying, well that’s not PC, you can’t use that word, you’ve got to use this one, for me it is fine, and I love the programme.”

Group discussion, male, older children, aged 30-55, C2DE, white, Cardiff

The findings from Ofcom’s 2009 Media Tracker supported this qualitative data. 22% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that content which is potentially offensive to a small number of people should not be shown, whereas 52% disagreed/strongly disagreed.

Appendix 1: Feedback on individual clips

This section includes feedback on each of the individual clips used as stimulus material in the research. This is designed to provide an overview of participants' views on the individual clips to provide more context for the principles and feedback on specific words set out in the main body of the report. This section therefore includes findings already outlined in the main body of the report and Appendix 2.

An indication of the weighting of participants' views is given. The term 'many' is used when the view was expressed frequently within and across the group discussions and depth interviews. The term 'some' is used when the view was expressed occasionally but across a number of group discussions and depth interviews, and the term 'few' is used when the view was expressed by a small number of participants only.

Clip 1: Family-orientated television talent show (Clip 1)

This programme was broadcast at 7.30pm on a Saturday on ITV1.

Clip 1 is taken from a family entertainment programme aimed at a wide range of viewers – the series invites members of the public to compete in a singing contest to win a recording contract as a pop artist. This clip features an audition for the competition in which an older, conservatively dressed woman unexpectedly sings "*We're having a gang bang*" to the surprise of the judges.

This clip was considered generally acceptable by many participants. However, participants aged over 55 were more likely to consider this clip unacceptable, both personally and generally. This view was also expressed by one or two participants across the younger age groups.

Participants who found this clip acceptable found it funny and saw the older person's performance as playful and lighthearted. These participants found it funny because

their expectations of this older woman were confounded and as a result, the impact of the offensive content of the song was lessened for some. The phrase ‘gang bang’ was seen as comparatively benign by many because they viewed it as an outdated word and believed the song was about people having a good time. Some also thought that the use of this phrase was more acceptable because younger children were likely to watch it without understanding its meaning.

Participants who found it less acceptable were concerned that it was shown on a programme that is popular with children and broadcast before the watershed. There was a concern that children were likely to hear the song and repeat it without knowing what it means and it may also lead to parents having awkward conversations as their children may ask them what the lyrics mean. A few participants felt that ‘gang bang’ has rape connotations and therefore considered it highly offensive.

A few participants felt more strongly that this clip was unacceptable because they believed it demonstrated irresponsible behaviour from the programme’s producers. They said that they thought the producers deliberately decided to include the clip knowing that it was not suitable for children. A few participants also thought that the producers had the opportunity to include the clip on post-watershed broadcasts of the show when it would be acceptable, but decided not to because they wanted it to attract controversy.

Clip 2: Trailer for a fashion reality television programme

This trailer was broadcast at various times between 4pm and 7pm on weekday and weekends over a two week period on Five.

Clip 2 is a promotional trailer for an American reality programme in which participants compete for a job at a leading fashion magazine. The programme is aimed at young people. The on-screen graphic reads “*Bitchy is the new black*” and one contestant is shown saying of another “*she’s such a f---ing bitch*” with the expletive partially bleeped.

Overall, this clip was considered generally unacceptable by many participants. In terms of personal acceptability, some participants in almost all groups also considered this clip personally unacceptable. This view was more widely held amongst parents of younger children or participants aged over 55.

Concerns about the acceptability of this clip tended to be largely focussed on its scheduling. Many participants felt that positioning the clip between two children's programmes made it very likely that children would be watching, and this was a significant concern given the language used. Some participants said that scheduling the trailer on a Sunday afternoon on a terrestrial channel also made it more likely that children would see it, and considered this unacceptable.

In addition, the fact that the potentially offensive language was included on a trailer rather than a programme made it less acceptable for many participants. These participants thought that people could make an active choice whether to watch programmes with potentially offensive content but as trailers are not something that people choose to watch, they do not have the opportunity to make an informed choice to avoid potentially offensive content.

The bleeping out of the word 'fucking' was not seen as acceptable by some participants as it was still clear what was being said. Some also felt that the bleeping actually drew greater attention to the word, attracting passive viewers' attention.

Clip 3: Teenage-orientated television soap

This programme was broadcast at 6.30pm on a Monday on Channel 4.

Clip 3 is from a soap opera aimed at a teenage and young adult audience. The characters are generally in their late teens or early twenties and the storylines often tackle difficult issues, for example drug addiction, homelessness, racism, and rape. In

this scene a young white man, (a known and disliked bully), accosts a young Asian woman (known to be struggling with her identity) and robs her. During the incident he calls her a “*little Paki*”.

Views on this clip varied substantially within and across groups, with some participants considering it completely acceptable, some considering it completely unacceptable, and some placing it towards the middle of the scale in terms of acceptability. This range of views was expressed by both white and Asian participants. However, younger participants (aged 18-30) were more likely to find this clip acceptable than other participants.

Some participants, including some Asian participants, saw the use of ‘Paki’ in this clip as acceptable because it was fully justified by the context. They thought that a storyline about racial bullying would not be effective without the use of this specific word. These participants said that highlighting this issue was important and so it was worth risking the upset that the inclusion of the word could potentially cause. Some participants also pointed out that this programme highlights social issues by offering details of information and support sources at the end of the programme if a hard-hitting storyline was running. Some participants also felt that using language, and plotlines, of this type was more acceptable because this programme is known for dealing with serious issues that may affect young people. People who were familiar with the programme saw it as being the correct vehicle for a story of this type.

Some participants also thought that the use of the word ‘Paki’ was necessary to provide realism. They said that the bullying character would be likely to use this phrase and so to avoid using it would detract from the programme’s credibility.

However, some participants, from both Asian and non-Asian backgrounds, felt that the context did not justify the use of racially abusive language. They believed that using a word like this, even when said by an unsympathetic character, was not acceptable.

They worried that the use of this language on television makes it appear acceptable and could encourage children to use it. In addition, depictions of racial bullying and the use of the word 'Paki' were genuinely upsetting for some participants as they reminded them of incidents in their lives.

The time of day and channel on which this clip was originally broadcast was not seen as relevant for some participants as the specific word used and the context made this an acceptable use of the word. Some thought that this word should not be used before the watershed or on programmes aimed at children or teenagers.

Clip 4: Comedy cartoon

This programme was broadcast at 5.30pm on a Sunday on Sky One.

Clip 4 is taken from a long running American cartoon sitcom featuring a family, their friends and neighbours. It is designed to appeal to a wide range of viewers. In this clip the mother of the family has been bought a landscaped garden by her husband and thinks aloud "*How much did he piss away on this?*".

Most participants found this clip both personally and generally acceptable. However, a few participants in the parent and older age groups (55-75) found it less acceptable.

Participants' views about this clip were driven by how offensive they consider the word 'piss' to be. Many participants did not consider the word 'piss' to be at all offensive and were happy for it to be used on television at any time of the day. Some felt that because this cartoon was usually in line with expectations, it was acceptable for it to occasionally push the boundaries.

However, although no participants saw 'pissed' as a highly offensive word, some were unhappy at its use at 5.30pm in a programme that appeals to children. Some parents particularly objected to this word being used on this programme because it was not a

word that they would allow their children to use and they believed that its use on a programme like this suggested that it is appropriate for common use. There was also a feeling from a few participants that it was worse because the word was used by a character who often acts as a moral compass within the show. As a result the word was portrayed as acceptable to use to potentially suggestible children.

Some participants also found this clip less acceptable because they trust this cartoon to be suitable for children and adults. They knew that it has content that is sometimes edgy, and deals with some adult themes, but usually in a way that is suitable for children. Using the word 'piss' was at odds with some viewers' expectations of the programme.

Clip 5: Live television sports coverage

This programme was broadcast at 5.05pm on a Sunday on ITV1.

Clip 5 is taken from live motor racing sports coverage. The commentator is shown catching interviews before the race starts and investigating the reasons for a delay. During an interview the commentator refers to "*pikeys out there putting some new tarmac down*" as a possible reason for the delay to the race.

In terms of their initial personal response, most participants in the general UK sample found this clip acceptable, often because they had not noticed or understood the references to travellers. Once the references were discussed, views were split. Many continued to find it generally acceptable whereas some found it unacceptable. There were no consistent differences in terms of responses across the demographic group, as views were heavily affected by knowledge of the specific words and phrases used.

Many participants from the general UK sample did not notice anything offensive about this clip as they either did not notice the reference to 'pikeys' or did not see it as an offensive term. The word 'pikeys' was said very quickly in reference to people repairing

a section of the race track and so was not clear or immediately picked up by everyone. Many participants did not understand 'pikey' to be an offensive term, understanding it to be a descriptive rather than pejorative word for members of the travelling community. Many also felt that the word was a synonym for 'cheap'. This view was most common among participants in Manchester, Birmingham, and Cardiff, while some in Belfast and Glasgow were not at all familiar with the word. There was also a view among some participants that 'pikey' was more acceptable than other discriminatory words because the travelling community is smaller than the population of other minority groups in the United Kingdom.

Within the general UK sample, some participants continued to find this clip acceptable, once the references were discussed and understood, because they thought that the commentator used the word 'pikeys' accidentally, rather than deciding to make a joke that would cause offence.

Participants from the general UK sample who found this clip offensive tended to be aware of the discriminatory nature of the word 'pikey' for describing the travelling community, sometimes because of personal experience. These participants understood that the word would never be used by gypsies or travellers to describe themselves or to each other. For this reason participants tended to feel that this was generally, rather than personally, offensive.

Participants who considered this clip offensive also referred to the fact that the commentator draws upon the stereotype that gypsies and travellers are known to offer to tarmac roads and drives, though many other participants did not understand this reference. Some participants also questioned whether the use of the word was accidental. They felt that it was a prepared line that the commentator chose to use and so was more offensive as a result.

Most participants from the general UK sample did not consider the time of day that this clip was shown was a significant factor in how offensive it was. Many participants believed that children who might be viewing were unlikely to understand or notice the word so it would not be unsuitable for them. Participants who considered the clip unacceptable felt that it would be unacceptable at any time of the day.

Travellers who saw this clip found it highly offensive as they consider 'pikey' to be a highly offensive term. They did not think that it was any more acceptable if it was said accidentally than if it was premeditated. For those who find this clip unacceptable, this feeling was intensified by the fact that the commentator who said the word is the presenter of a serious piece of sports programming. His main function is to inform and make sense of events for the public rather than make jokes, so the fact that he made a discriminatory joke was seen as particularly inappropriate. They said that this clip would be unacceptable at any time of the day.

Clip 6: Television entertainment series on cars

This programme was broadcast at 8pm on a Sunday on BBC Two.

Clip 6 is a long running entertainment series about cars. It is often lighthearted and contains banter between the three presenters, tending to appeal to men, but also to children. In this montage of clips: a pie and a key were shown on a car bonnet as a reference to 'pikey' (i.e. meaning 'pie' and 'key' and therefore 'pikey'); a reference was made to "a 'steak and kidney' 'lock opener'"; and a further reference was made to "*anyone whose business is selling pegs and heather*".

As with Clip 5 (the live television sports coverage), most participants from the general UK sample found this clip personally acceptable when watching it at home and initially in the group discussions because they had not noticed or understood the word 'pikey'. Many continued to find it generally acceptable once the use of the word 'pikey' was pointed out and discussed, whereas some found it unacceptable. There were no

consistent differences in terms of responses across the demographic group, as views were heavily affected by knowledge of the word 'pikey'.

The issues regarding awareness and interpretation of the word 'pikey' were the same for this clip as they were in Clip 5 (the live television sports coverage). Some participants considered this clip acceptable because the word 'pikey' was not used but implied by the pie and key placed on the boot of a car. The fact that some participants found this pun funny also lessened the potential offence. This view was expressed by participants within the general UK sample, and also by participants in the group of male travellers included in this research.

Some participants also felt that the clip was less offensive because it was shown on this particular programme. They said that the programme is known for its edgy and irreverent humour so people who watch it know what to expect from it. This clip was also considered less offensive because the presenter used the word to describe himself rather than to label another person or people, and the use implied 'cheapskate' rather than 'traveller'.

Viewers who did not find this clip offensive were happy for it to be shown on BBC2 at 8pm, feeling that this was late enough for its content. Some also said that BBC2 was appropriate as they associated it with edgier content that might be less suitable for people who are easily offended.

Some participants who did not notice the 'pikey' reference did notice the presenter's reference to "*pegs and heather*" and understood this to be referring to travellers. This was seen by some, particularly travellers themselves, as perpetuating a negative stereotype. Some of those who found the word 'pikey' offensive felt that it should not be used at any time, though some participants thought that it would be more suitable after 9pm.

As with the live sports coverage clip (Clip 5), some travellers, particularly women, found this clip unacceptable. However, some male travellers found this clip more acceptable than the live sports coverage clip (Clip 5). They said that it was less offensive because it is a subtle reference which they found amusing.

Clip 7: Television entertainment series on cars

This programme was broadcast at 8pm on a Sunday on BBC Two.

Clip 7 is a long running entertainment series about cars (see also Clip 6 above). It is often lighthearted and contains banter between the three presenters, tending to appeal to men, but also to children. In this clip the presenter describes a car as *“It's gay. A bit ginger beer”*.

This clip was considered both generally and personally acceptable by many participants across the general UK sample, particularly younger participants. However, views were polarised amongst the older age group (55-75) and the female group aged 30-50 with no children.

Many participants from the general UK sample did not see the description of a car as 'gay' as offensive. Equally calling a car *“a bit ginger beer”* was not seen as offensive by some as it is a piece of rhyming slang that was not understood as potentially offensive to gay people. Many participants thought that the references to Jesus in relation to a studio audience member with a beard were more likely to be offensive to religious people. Many participants did not see the phrase 'gay' as necessarily offensive to homosexual people when it is not used to refer in a negative way to homosexuality.

Within the general UK sample, some participants found the use of 'gay' in this context acceptable because they saw it as a piece of playful banter, of the type they expect on this programme. They also felt that this particular use of these phrases was more acceptable because it was spontaneously brought up by an audience member rather

than scripted in advance. Some also believed that gay people would not be offended by this, so it was considered acceptable. In terms of scheduling, some participants in the general UK sample noted that people expect this type of content on BBC Two, which made it more acceptable. Few participants considered showing this programme at 8pm on a Sunday to be inappropriate. The language used was seen as largely suitable for children.

A few participants from the general UK sample felt that using 'gay' to mean that something is rubbish was an offensive term as it draws a link between homosexuality and something being rubbish. They thought that for this reason it should not be used on television at any time. Some felt that using language of this type on television encourages it to be used in this way and that television should set a higher standard rather than merely reflecting language as it is used today. There was also a group of participants who did not consider the term 'gay' to be personally offensive but believed that gay people would find this offensive.

Some gay, lesbian, and bisexual participants found the use of 'gay' acceptable in this clip because it was not used in a way that was malicious towards gay people. Some participants, particularly lesbian and bisexual women, considered it more acceptable because 'gay' was used to mean 'rubbish' which they did not find offensive. They also said that 'ginger beer' was old fashioned slang and no longer as offensive as it once had been, or as offensive as other words such as 'faggot'.

Some participants from this minority audience, particularly some gay men, did not feel that the language in this clip was acceptable. Whilst they understood that the word 'gay' was being used to mean 'rubbish', they thought this was unacceptable, and said that it would not be considered acceptable to use a racist word in this way. Some participants were also concerned that it would encourage others to use this language, and felt that it should not be used on television or radio. However, some thought that

the use of 'gay' to be 'bad' or 'effeminate' has become commonplace and was now a generally acceptable alternative meaning of the word.

Clip 8: Pre-watershed television soap

This programme was broadcast at 7.30pm on a Sunday on ITV.

Clip 8 is from a long running soap opera watched by a broad range of people. This particular clip features a heated argument between some of the well known female characters who live on the street. During the argument the words 'bitch', 'cow' and 'slut' were repeatedly used.

Views on the overall acceptability of this clip varied both within and across the group discussions. Younger participants (aged 18-30) were more likely to have concerns about the general acceptability of the clip. Views were polarised in other groups, with some participants considering the clip completely acceptable, and others expressing concerns, although very few participants considered it to be unacceptable.

Participants who found this acceptable for pre-watershed viewing said that the language was necessary for the drama to be seen as realistic. Many felt that this type of language is heard everywhere and so there was no issue with using it during a show which children may be watching. Many participants also thought that in this instance it was appropriate for that character to be using this sort of language because it was an unsympathetic character who was known to be a bully. Those who watch the show expected that she would use language of that type and it fitted with her aggressive nature. Participants who found this clip acceptable felt that the language was appropriate in the mid-evening slot in which it was used.

Some participants thought that programmes that are shown between 6pm and 9pm in the evening are likely to be viewed by children but under the supervision of parents or other adults. This means that it was acceptable for them to include some potentially

offensive language, including words such as 'bitch' and 'slut', as parents are able to decide if the content is suitable for their children.

Participants who found this clip less acceptable said that this was not the sort of language they expected from the show because it was shown in the early evening and children were likely to be watching. They considered it potentially irresponsible for programmes that are generally suitable for family viewing to occasionally include language that they saw as only suitable for older audiences. There was also a fear that it might encourage older children to behave in a similar way and use language of this type. Some participants believed that it would have been possible for the show's producers to have replaced the offending phrases with other words such as 'tramp' that are less offensive, but would still carry similar weight and would not make it less realistic. In addition some participants felt that the aggressive context in which the words were used made them less acceptable because they were aimed at someone and accompanied by minor violence.

The words that were seen as offensive in this clip were 'bitch' and 'slut', rather than 'cow'. These words were seen as particularly offensive to some participants as they are used to describe women in a negative way, and some participants thought they should not be used before the watershed, whether or not children are likely to be watching with their parents.

Clip 9: Television house-mate reality programme

The programme was broadcast at 10pm on a Wednesday on Channel 4.

Clip 9 is taken from a reality programme in which 'housemates' live together in a specially designed house where they are recorded by cameras and microphones at all times and they are not allowed any contact with the outside world. The housemates compete to win a cash prize by avoiding evictions from the house. In this clip a white woman and two black women are seen chatting. After a comment from one of the black

housemates about feeling pregnant, the white woman comments, in what appears to be a lighthearted way, “*Are you pushing it out, you nigger*” and is challenged in a discussion which follows.

Across the general UK sample, including both white and BME participants, views on this clip were polarised. Few participants felt that the clip was completely acceptable, and many expressed some concern but did not consider it completely unacceptable. However, there was a significant minority who considered the clip unacceptable, particularly older participants (aged 55-75) and parents of older children.

Many participants were aware of this clip because of the media coverage when it was originally broadcast. Some participants, including both white and BME participants, believed that it was appropriate for Channel 4 to broadcast the contestant using this word as it created a worthwhile debate about the casual use of potentially racist language. Some also felt that the programme’s producers were showing a real conversation, in line with the aim of the programme. Some participants thought that the use of the word ‘nigger’ in this context was less offensive than if it had been used in an aggressive way because it was not designed to offend and in fact reflected badly on the contestant.

This clip also provoked some debate on the use of the word ‘nigger’ in a wider context. Some white participants said that it had become more acceptable to use the word ‘nigger’ as it is used by black people to describe each other, for example in hip-hop music. Some participants believed that this word has been reclaimed by the people it was previously used to abuse and therefore should no longer be treated as taboo.

In terms of its use in this clip, some participants, including some Afro-Caribbean participants, believed that it was never acceptable for the word ‘nigger’ to be broadcast on television. Others, also including some Afro-Caribbean participants, believed that it was acceptable for the word to be broadcast but only in a documentary or if there was

a discussion of its meaning and implications. The use of the word in this casual context was troubling for some as they believed it suggests that it is acceptable to use 'nigger' to describe black people. They feared that this might encourage others to see it as acceptable although they considered it to be highly offensive.

Some felt that there was no reason for the producers to use this clip, other than to boost ratings for the show. It was not a live broadcast so an editorial decision was made to broadcast a word that is considered highly offensive by some. This decision was considered irresponsible by some participants.

Given the polarised views on the use of the word 'nigger' on television in principle, the scheduling of the clip was not a significant factor. Those who considered it acceptable in principle were comfortable with it being used after the watershed. Others said that it should never be broadcast. Both of these views were expressed by both white and BME participants.

Clip 10: Television celebrity chef reality programme

This programme was broadcast at 9pm on a Friday on Channel 4.

Clip 10 is from a reality series in which a celebrity chef visits, and attempts to turn around, failing restaurants. In this clip he is shown confronting the owner of one restaurant and delivering his unvarnished opinion of the owner's approach to the business. The restaurant chef is also shown angrily berating his boss. The words 'fuck' and 'fucking' are used repeatedly and aggressively throughout.

The repeated use of the words 'fuck', 'shit', 'arse', and 'bollocks' in this clip divided opinion over what is acceptable language and particularly an acceptable volume of offensive language. Some participants in almost all groups considered this clip personally unacceptable, and this view was more widely held amongst participants

aged over 55. However, others found the clip both personally and generally acceptable.

Those who found this clip acceptable said that it was unscripted and reflected real people's behaviour in a high pressure situation. Some also argued that viewers know that the presenter uses offensive language frequently and so know what to expect from this programme. They may have thought that the quantity of swearing was excessive and made for uncomfortable viewing, but said that this did not make it offensive or unacceptable. Many participants found the scheduling of this clip acceptable as it was after the watershed and shown on a channel that was known for showing edgy and potentially offensive programming. There was also a view that the time of broadcast made it acceptable because the potentially offensive words are commonly broadcast at this time, though not usually in such a high volume.

Those who found this clip offensive objected to the quantity of strong language in the clip and in particular the number of uses of the word 'fuck'. Some argued that there was no justification for this volume of swearing. They saw it as gratuitous and offensive as a result. A number of participants also felt that the aggressive context in which the language was used made the clip offensive.

Some participants thought that a programme with this volume of offensive language should be scheduled later in the evening, for example at 11pm. Some also noted that children are likely to stay up later on weekends than during the rest of the week, so programmes with large volumes of strong language should not be shown immediately after 9pm.

Clip 11: Adult-orientated television comedy series

This programme was broadcast at 10pm on a Friday on Channel 4.

Clip 11 is taken from a comedy series set in a talent agency. In this clip two of the members of the agency were meeting a prospective client. During the meeting both members of the agency repeatedly use the words ‘fuck’ and ‘cunt’.

Views were split on this clip because of the specific words used and the frequency with which they were used. Some participants considered this clip personally and generally unacceptable, and this view was more widely held amongst participants aged over 55, particularly female participants. However, some found it both personally and generally acceptable.

The participants who found this clip acceptable said that the language used fitted in with the context of the programme. They believed that the potentially offensive language was necessary for the comedy to work. Some participants also felt that the programme was unlikely to offend as it was preceded by a warning that it included strong language and that the time and channel of broadcast meant that the audience would know what to expect.

Those who saw this clip as offensive did not find it funny. They saw the language used as excessive and believed it was only used for the sake of it or to provoke a reaction. Some participants disliked the words ‘fuck’ and ‘cunt’ and so found their use inherently offensive. The word ‘cunt’ was seen as particularly offensive by some participants, even those who considered the word ‘fuck’ acceptable.

Whatever their personal views, participants generally saw the scheduling of this clip as appropriate for its content because it was shown an hour after the watershed on a channel that is known for showing potentially offensive comedy programmes. Some participants mentioned that they would be less tolerant of a programme such as this if it

were shown on the BBC. Some participants would prefer that a show of this type be scheduled later on a Friday night as they felt that some children were likely to be watching at this time. Others said that after 9pm it was up to parents to control what their children see and do not see.

Clip 12: Adult satirical television comedy

This programme was broadcast at 9pm on a Friday on ITV1.

Clip 12 is a satirical comedy drama set in a television production office run by an egotistical and maverick television producer. This episode shows the producer working under pressure to make a hit programme after the failure of his last show. The programme features a transsexual character called Georgina who is hired by the television producer for her track record in writing successful television drama. This results in anger from the in-house team who felt sidelined and go on strike. During the episode Georgina experiences bigoted treatment from the characters, including Jonathan and some of his production team. References include "*a cock in a frock*" and "*trannies*". The producer's crass and prejudiced character is the butt of the episode's humour.

Within the general UK sample, views about this clip varied substantially, with no clear demographic trends.

Many participants from the general UK sample found the language used entirely acceptable within the context of the programme. Some thought that the offensive language used in this clip was primarily used by a character that is seen as callous and egomaniacal and so the viewer is not likely to take his views seriously. Some participants also felt that the over the top portrayal of the situation and the type of humour meant that the language was less offensive. As the programme was shown after the watershed, the language was seen acceptable by some participants.

Participants from the general UK sample who found this clip offensive were more offended by the discrimination shown in the programme rather than the language used. It was felt to be offensive because the transgender character was treated with scorn and was not portrayed in a likeable way. Some also objected to the use of swear words, though often participants found swear words relating to transgender people, such as 'cock in a frock', no more offensive than the use of the word 'cock' in any other context. Some of these participants believed that it should have been shown later as it was still likely that children may have been watching at that time. They believed that there was a danger that children watching may not have understood the context of the programme and felt that it suggested this behaviour was acceptable.

Some transgender participants thought that it reinforced stereotypes that portray transgender people as freaks and it should not have been shown. This issue of the portrayal of characters was of greater concern to transgender participants than the actual language used. The language used was seen by some transgender participants as funny and detached enough from reality that they believed that it was unlikely to encourage other people to use it.

Clip 13: Television adult comedy pop quiz

This programme was broadcast at 9.30pm on a Thursday on BBC2.

Clip 13 was taken from a comedy pop quiz television show, which features guest competitors from music, television and comedy. In this clip one celebrity competitor unexpectedly gives the correct answer and her team mate comments "*you thought Gaby was retarded, but she's not*".

Within the general UK sample, many participants found this clip both personally and generally acceptable. However, some older participants (aged 55-75) and the female group aged 30-50 with no children found it either less acceptable or unacceptable both personally and generally.

Many participants from the general UK sample did not consider the use of the word 'retarded' in this clip to be offensive because it was intended in a playful way. They felt that 'banter' of this type was expected on this programme and so it was not offensive. Some participants thought that the word 'retarded' has developed a dual meaning, both referring to learning disabilities and also to people being a little stupid. They argued that it was clear that this use of the phrase was meant to mean 'stupid' rather than 'disabled'. Some participants also said that the use of the word 'retarded' was more acceptable because it was being used to describe someone who was present and so able to defend herself if she found it offensive. They felt it would be less acceptable if it was used about someone outside the show. The scheduling of this clip was largely seen as appropriate by participants. They thought that the language appeared on a programme where the audience would expect this kind of banter and was shown after the watershed.

Some participants from the general UK sample who did not find this clip personally offensive believed that it might offend disabled people. They believed that those who have learning difficulties might object to people using their condition for comedic purposes. Some participants felt that this clip was offensive irrespective of the playful context of the show. They said that this type of prejudice-based teasing could encourage people to bully those who are disabled and that it was unnecessary when the word 'stupid' could have been used instead. A few participants thought it should be shown later on to ensure that fewer children would be watching.

Some disabled participants or their family members also found the clip generally acceptable because it was intended in a playful way and not aimed at someone with a disability. However, some participants with experience of learning difficulties found this clip highly offensive because they have personal experience of the word 'retarded' being used to taunt themselves or their friends and family. As a result the use of this

word was offensive because it reminded them of previous upsetting events in their lives.

Clip 14: Radio daily magazine programme

This programme was broadcast at 1pm on a Friday on BBC6 Music.

Clip 14 was taken from a daily magazine programme on a radio station is aimed at 25 to 44-year-olds. The main focus of the programme is music, but sometimes features guests from other types of entertainment. In this clip an American stand-up comedian is interviewed and refers to former American vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin. He comments that Sarah Palin *“is a 44 year-old mother of five, two of which are retarded”* and *“One’s got Down’s Syndrome and the other volunteered for Iraq, so that’s two retards out of five”* and *“The woman has a baby with Down’s Syndrome; how can America get behind her when even God obviously hates her”*.

This clip was seen as completely unacceptable by almost all participants, including disabled participants and their family members. The comedian’s views were considered offensive and distasteful as they were directed at a disabled child. Participants felt that these views were expressed in a deliberately aggressive and hurtful way and that attacking people because they are disabled was not acceptable. In addition, many participants said that the comment that *“even God hates”* Sarah Palin for giving her a child with Down’s Syndrome was particularly offensive. This clip was also seen by many as particularly offensive because it was directed at real people who were not present to defend themselves.

The participants who found this clip offensive tended to find the sentiments expressed more offensive than the actual language used, although participants did object to the statement that Sarah Palin’s son is ‘retarded’ for volunteering to fight in the Iraq war. This statement was considered more offensive because of the previous reference to Sarah Palin’s other ‘retarded’ child, who has Down’s Syndrome. In terms of the time of

broadcast, many participants felt that this sort of content was inappropriate at this time and offensive at any time, both in terms of personal and general acceptability. Some thought that the clip should not have been broadcast at any time.

Those who found this clip less offensive believed that it was important for people to be able to air views such as these to preserve freedom of speech, even if they disagreed with them and found them personally offensive. Some participants also said that it was necessary for the presenter and the producers to allow the comedian to continue his speech even if his views were offensive because to do otherwise would be an act of censorship.

Some participants felt that this clip would have been more acceptable if it had been played after the watershed when children are unlikely to be listening. (N.B. Many assume that the television watershed also applies to radio.)

Clip 15: Radio interview with John Lennon

This programme was broadcast at 9am on a Friday on BBC Radio 4.

Clip 15 was a radio documentary featuring lengthy extracts from a full and frank 1970 interview with John Lennon. During the interview he used the words 'fuck' and 'bastard'.

Views on this clip were polarised within and across the group discussions, with no clear trends in views in terms of demographics.

Those who found this clip acceptable thought that it was clearly advertised as including swearing and that those who chose to listen would know what to expect from an interview with John Lennon anyway. Some felt that although the language might offend some people, it provided an insight into a fascinating person and therefore it was justified.

The objections to this clip primarily concerned the fact that it was broadcast at 9am. Many participants thought that at this time of day there was a chance that young children may be listening to the radio with their parents while on the way to school or nursery. Many participants were not aware that there is no watershed on the radio, so did not expect to hear this kind of language at 9am. Many also thought that this was not an appropriate time for this type of language, regardless of how likely it is that children may be listening. Some felt that it was unnecessary to schedule this so early. They said that a pre-recorded programme like this could be aired at any time so the morning was a poor choice. Few participants were strongly personally offended by the language in this clip but many thought that the scheduling was inappropriate.

Clip 16: Radio pop song

The song was broadcast at 2pm on a Monday on Kiss 100.

Clip 16 was taken from a pop song broadcast on a London based radio station which features hip hop, R&B, urban, and dance music. The lyrics "*If you seek Amy*" sound like 'F.U.C.K. me'.

Most participants failed to notice the deliberate play on words that means that listeners hear 'F.U.C.K. me' in the song's chorus and therefore considered it personally acceptable initially. Once the song lyrics were understood, most participants found this clip to be mid-level in terms of acceptability overall, with the exception of older people (aged 55-75) and the female group aged 30-50 with no children who found it less acceptable or unacceptable.

Among those who found the clip inoffensive after they were made aware of the content, many thought that other people were unlikely to notice it either. Some also believed that as it merely sounds like something inappropriate it should not be criticised. They said that spelling out potentially offensive words was less offensive than songs

containing strong language which was bleeped out as it draws less attention to them. Some of those who noticed the reference unprompted or who have heard about this song in the media admired the ingenuity of the songwriters rather than being offended by it. Many participants felt that it was acceptable to play this song at any time of day, regardless of how likely children are to be listening.

However, some participants considered this clip to be highly offensive once the hidden 'F.U.C.K. me' reference had been explained because they objected to a song with this content being sung by an artist whose music appeals to children. Some also thought that it was worse that the reference was hidden than if it was overt as this may mean that children will sing these words without understanding what they are singing. Many participants thought that this song was potentially offensive to other people or inappropriate for children to hear, than feeling personally offended by it themselves. Some felt that it was not acceptable for the uncut version of this song to be played during the day, when children are likely to be listening.

Clips used for groups/depths with minority audiences

Clip 17: Adult orientated sixth form comedy series

N.B. The comments on this clip are based on six in-depth interviews with disabled people and their family members.

This programme was broadcast at 10.35pm on a Thursday on E4.

This programme is a comedy about four boys and their experiences through sixth-form education. In this clip one character mocks another by saying "*have you got Down's Syndrome or something?*".

Many participants considered the language in this clip to be acceptable as they said that it reflected the way that older teenagers are likely to speak. Those who may have found it offensive if it was said by different, older, characters found it funny in this

context. Participants also said that it would be more offensive if there was a general focus on disabled people throughout the episode but as it was only one reference it was therefore less likely to cause upset. However, some participants noted that it might be highly offensive to people with Down's Syndrome or their families, because it focused specifically on this individual condition.

The participant who had a child with Down's Syndrome had mixed feelings about this clip. On one hand, it stood out to him within the clip and he would have preferred an alternative term, such as special needs to be used, rather than singling out Down's Syndrome. However, he also thought that the use of this language reflected how teenage boys speak to each other and so fitted with the context of the programme. Most participants felt that this programme was shown at an acceptable time and on an appropriate channel. The post-watershed slot was seen as appropriate for this kind of content and E4 was known to be a channel that shows programmes that may offend some viewers. Some participants said they would find this language less acceptable if it was used in the same programme on the BBC.

Clip 18: Family orientated American sitcom

N.B. The comments on this clip are based on two group discussions with gay, lesbian and bisexual people.

This programme was broadcast at 5.30pm on a Tuesday on Virgin 1.

Clip 18 was taken from an American sitcom about a modern-day dad and his life with his family. In this clip a child is shown joking with the dad character by saying "your shoes are gay" to which the dad character replies "yeah and your hairdo is gayer". The child finally replies "yeah, well that hat is really, really gay".

Some gay, lesbian, and bisexual participants found the use of 'gay' acceptable in this clip because it was not used in a way that was malicious towards gay people. This clip was also considered more acceptable because it was American and the use of gay in

the sense of 'bad' was seen as more commonly used in America. The word 'gay' was also not thought to be one of the more overtly homophobic words and was seen as more acceptable than 'faggot' or 'homo'.

Those who did not feel that the language in this clip was acceptable said that it was inappropriate in a programme that is scripted. They were also concerned about the use of this language in a programme that is aimed at, and primarily watched by, children. This made this clip less acceptable as they believed it may encourage children to use this word.

Clip 19: Chart-style review programme

N.B. The comments on this clip are based on one group discussion and one in-depth interview with transgender people.

This programme was broadcast at 9.35pm on a Saturday on BBC3.

Clip 19 was taken from an irreverent end-of-year review programme presented in the style of a "chart" countdown. It featured Brazilian football player Ronaldo who had been reported in the media as being discovered in a hotel room with three transvestite prostitutes. During the clip the voice over referred to "*chicks with dicks*", "*trannies*" and "*fellas in frocks*".

Many transgender participants considered the use of 'tranny' in this clip to be unacceptable. Whilst they may refer to themselves as 'trannies', they felt that it has negative overtones when used by people outside the transgender community, and should therefore be avoided.

Opinion was more divided over the phrase 'chicks with dicks'. Many thought that this was a throw away phrase, and that the fact that it rhymes softens its meaning. However, the female to male transgender participant felt that this phrase

should be less generally acceptable, as it focuses on one aspect of being transgender, whilst overlooking the many other factors that define transgender people.

Appendix 2: Feedback from minority groups on potentially discriminatory language, i.e. potentially offensive words that might be seen as linked to or aimed at a particular group

This section includes feedback from minority audience groups included in the research. This is designed to provide an overview of views to provide more context for the principles and feedback on specific words set out in the main body of the report. This section therefore includes findings already outlined in the main body of the report and Appendix 1.

Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) participants

N.B. This section is based on six individual interviews with BME participants and the views expressed in four group discussions involving BME and white participants

Participants from BME communities had similar views about the use of potentially offensive racist language on television and radio as the white participants. This was at odds with the expectations of many white participants who expected that people of a particular race or ethnic group were more likely to be offended by discriminatory language that relates to that race or ethnic group.

Participants from BME communities fell into two groups in terms of their views on the use of potentially offensive racist language. Some BME participants objected to the use of racist words on television and radio at all, because they considered them highly offensive and wanted to ensure that their use was not promoted on television and radio, even if they are being used in an educational context. Others found the use of potentially offensive racist language acceptable if it was used to make a moral point or to educate viewers and listeners about its negative impact.

In some cases participants from BME communities were upset by seeing discriminatory language used in ways that reminded them of specific experiences where they were discriminated against using those phrases. However, this did not necessarily mean that they considered the clips offensive. Although they found the clips personally upsetting and affecting, some still supported the use of the language to educate others.

Disabled people and family members of disabled people

N.B. This section is based on six in-depth interviews with disabled people and their family members.

The views of some disabled participants and their family members differed from the general UK sample if they had specific personal experience of the use of discriminatory language. Some participants and their family members had experienced bullying or name calling using words such as 'retard', 'spastic' or 'cripple'. As a result, they found these words personally offensive and considered their use on television or radio to be unacceptable. Disabled participants and their family members who did not have specific personal experience of bullying or name calling using these words shared the views expressed by the general UK sample, which varied depending on the word. The word 'spastic' was broadly considered unacceptable. The word 'cripple' was not well known but considered unacceptable by those who knew it. Views on the word 'retarded' were polarised depending on the intent with which it was used and who it was directed towards.

Travellers

N.B. This section is based on two group discussions with travellers

There were clear differences between the genders amongst traveller participants.

Women

Female travellers found discriminatory language unacceptable in any scenario. They believed that they are a racial minority that is discriminated against. Consequently they

were also sensitive to any kind of language that has the potential to discriminate against another minority group.

They found the words 'pikey' and 'gyppo' unacceptable in any circumstances. Some younger participants were aware that 'pikey' can mean 'cheap', but said this does not make the word less offensive to them. Older participants were only aware of the word in its discriminatory sense. All found its use hurtful and were concerned that broadcasting it on television and radio will promote its use by the public.

Female travellers' views on strong language in general differed from our main sample. They felt that it was not necessary to use strong language and that all but the mildest words should be avoided. They argued that the television and radio broadcasters should set an example for society, rather than reflect the way in which society behaves. They were also particularly conscious of the influence that public figures and presenters can have on the public's use of language. Older female travellers had the strongest views in this respect, but younger participants were largely in agreement.

Males

As with the female travellers, male travellers said that, in principle, the words 'pikey' and 'gyppo' are unacceptable in any scenario. However, although they found the use of 'pikey' in the live television sports coverage (Clip 5) offensive, they were less concerned by its use in the television entertainment series on cars (Clip 6). Here, they said that it was less offensive because it was a subtle reference which they found amusing.

The male travellers were more relaxed than the female travellers about potentially offensive language, particularly where the terms are used in a comedy or very late at night.

They were less accepting of discriminatory language than the general UK sample, although not as strongly against it as the female travellers. For example, although they could see the use of the word 'Paki' in the teenage-orientated television soap (Clip 3) was educational, they would still prefer another word to have been used in its place.

Gay, lesbian and bisexual people

N.B. This section is based on two group discussions with gay, lesbian and bisexual people

Gay, lesbian and bisexual participants agreed that words such as 'faggot' and 'dyke' are usually used in an aggressive manner which can only be interpreted as discriminatory. Consequently, many considered these words to be unacceptable pre-watershed. However, some, mainly female, participants felt that these words could be acceptable pre-watershed, provided they were used for educational purposes and that they are acceptable post-watershed, in either an educational or a realistic concept.

Opinion was divided over other terms that refer to sexual orientation. Some male participants found the use of 'gay' in the television entertainment series on cars (Clip 7) unacceptable, arguing that it would not be acceptable to draw a link between a racist word and the idea that something is 'rubbish.' They believed that, although the word is not always directly derogatory, it is still offensive. This was an area where they thought broadcasters should set higher standards than society, and they did not think that timing or channel should be considered.

Other participants, mainly female, did not find the use of 'gay' in the television entertainment series on cars (Clip 7) offensive. They said that the word has multiple meanings, including 'happy', 'homosexual' and 'rubbish' and that it can be used in one sense without referring to the other meanings.

Many participants found the use of the word 'gay' less acceptable in the family orientated American sitcom (Clip 18). Even those who did not find it a particularly

offensive term in general, were more concerned when it is used by a child character in a scripted programme. They said that in these circumstances it would have been easy to avoid the use of the word, and that for a broadcaster to have included it would make it seem more acceptable in the eyes of the public and to other children.

Transgender people

N.B. This section is based on one in-depth interview and one group discussion with transgender people.

On a personal level, many transgender participants found words which discriminate against transgender people offensive, although some accepted them as an inevitable part of life and tried not to be affected by them.

Participants all felt that they belong to a group that has little public recognition or acceptance. Their response to transgender discriminatory language was largely motivated by the impact language is likely to have on the public's perceptions of their group as a whole. This meant that, when considering language in terms of general acceptability, they split into two groups.

One group said that any discriminatory language relating to transgender issues should not be acceptable, as they believed it plays a role in reinforcing existing negative stereotypes, and promotes the use of such language to the general public. For these participants, even where they consider the language itself to be relatively mild, such as 'cock in a frock', they found its use unacceptable on television or radio, as it is often used in conjunction with unacceptable behaviour. Participants in this group believed that using these terms in an educational context was justifiable, but will only accept their use in a comedy if the programme does not ridicule transgender people in any way.

Participants in the other group felt that they should accept the use of milder words, as they worry that appearing to be offended by relatively minor derogatory comments will

undermine their case when the language or behaviour was really offensive. Participants in this group accepted the use of transphobic language in an educational or realistic scenario pre-watershed, and were open to its use in comedy programmes because they did not consider uses of this type serious or offensive enough to object to.

When discussed out of the broadcasting context, many found 'cock in a frock' and 'chick with a dick' inoffensive, because they rhyme and are therefore amusing. However, the female to male transgender participant believed that these phrases focus solely on the presence or absence of the penis, which belittles the transgender experience. However, it was largely the way in which the words are used that determined how acceptable they were to these participants.

Participants were less accepting of the word 'tranny'. Although it is a word they will use amongst themselves, many did not find it acceptable on television or radio. This was largely because they felt it was often applied inaccurately, referring to transgender people rather than cross-dressers. They believed it is also being used increasingly in a derogatory sense and so was best avoided.

Appendix 3: Glossary of terms relating to offensive language

BME: Black and Minority Ethnic groups

The Broadcasting Code: A set of rules that all radio and television broadcasters which are licensed by Ofcom, must comply with as a condition of the licence. It contains rules relating to a range of matters including offensive language. The rules specifically on offensive language are:

- Rule 1.14: The most offensive language must not be broadcast before the watershed or when children are particularly likely to be listening.
- Rule 1.15: Offensive language must not be used in programmes made for younger children except in the most exceptional circumstances.
- Rule 1.16: Offensive language must not be broadcast before the watershed, or when children are particularly likely to be listening, unless it is justified by the context. In any event, frequent use of such language must be avoided before the watershed.
- Rule 2.3: In applying generally accepted standards broadcasters must ensure that material which may cause offence is justified by the context. Such material may include, but is not limited to, offensive language, violence, sex, sexual violence, humiliation, distress, violation of human dignity, discriminatory treatment or language. Appropriate information should also be broadcast where it would assist in avoiding or minimising offence.

Children: Under the Broadcasting Code, children are people under the age of fifteen years.

Context: Under the Broadcasting Code, context includes, but is not limited to:

- Tone and intent of the broadcast;
- The editorial content of the programme, programmes or series;
- The service on which the material is broadcast;
- The time of broadcast;
- What other programmes are scheduled before and after the programme or programmes concerned;
- The degree of harm or offence likely to be caused by the inclusion of any particular sort of material in programmes generally or programmes of a particular description;
- The likely size and composition of the potential audience and likely expectation of the audience;
- The extent to which the nature of the content can be brought to the attention of the potential audience for example by giving information; and
- The effect of the material on viewers or listeners who may come across it unawares.

Generally accepted standards: Standards which broadcasters licensed by Ofcom must apply to the content of their television services to provide adequate protection to viewers from harmful and/or offensive material. Ofcom's Broadcasting Code Guidance states that generally accepted standards will change over time and will also vary according to the context. It also states the understanding of what are generally accepted standards should be underpinned by relevant research.

Offensive language: Under the Broadcasting Code, this term applies to language that is generally considered to cause offence and which is unsuitable for children. Offensive language is considered to be less offensive than the most offensive language and is

broadly defined through research. (See rules 1.15 and 1.16 above.) The “most offensive language” refers to language that is generally considered to be the most offensive. The definition of the most offensive language is broadly defined through research but tends to relate specifically to the f*** word and c*** word. (See Rule 1.14 above.)

Platform: The distribution system that enables consumers to receive digital broadcasts. For example, Sky on digital satellite or Virgin Media on digital cable.

Qualitative research: Collecting, analysing, and interpreting data by observing what people do and said. The nature of this type of research is exploratory and open-ended. Discussion groups and in-depth interviews are among the many formal approaches that are used. Samples tend to be smaller compared with quantitative research.

Quantitative research: Used to measure how many people feel, think or act in a particular way. These surveys tend to include large samples and the use of structured, closed questions.

Watershed: As defined in the Broadcasting Code, the watershed is at 21:00 and only applies to television. Material unsuitable for children should not, in general, be shown before 21:00 or after 05:30.

“When children are particularly likely to be listening”: In the Broadcasting Code this phrase only applies to radio. It particularly refers to the school run and breakfast time, but might include other times when children are likely to be listening to the radio. Material unsuitable for children should not, in general, be broadcast on the radio during these times.

Appendix 4: Recruitment questionnaire (general UK sample)

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. What is the occupation of the member of your household with the largest income?
(Chief Income Earner)

Position

Industry

Skill/Qualification

If Retired, Previous Occupation?

If Self-Employed/Managerial, How many employees responsible for?

If Civil Service/Armed Forces, What grade, what rank?

2. Social Class of Chief Income Earner

- A.....1 Recruit
B.....2
C1.....3 to
C2.....4
D.....5 quota
E.....6

3. Age last birthday

Write in here:

- 18 – 20.....1 Recruit
20 – 30.....2
30 – 45.....3 to
45 – 55.....4
56 – 64.....5 quota
65 – 756

4. Sex

Male1
Female2

5. Work Status

Work full time1
Work part time.....2
Student3
Not working nor seeking work4
Unemployed5
RECRUIT A SPREAD IN EACH GROUP

6. Marital Status

Single - living at home with parents..... 1
Single - moved away from parents..... 2
Married/cohabiting 3
Separated/widowed/divorced 4

7. Occupation of Respondent

9. Type/Method of Recruitment

Street 1
In-home 2
At place of work..... 3
From list..... 4
Recruiter's contact / panel..... 5
Face to Face..... 6
Telephone..... 7
Other (specify) 8

10. UK Nationality

Have you been Resident in the UK for longer than 12 months?

Yes 1
No 2

CLOSE IF NO

INTRODUCTION

Good morning/ afternoon/ evening. I am from Synovate, an independent market research organisation, and we are conducting some group discussions / depth interviews in this area about Can I ask you a few questions? It will take approximately ... minutes.

X1 We are looking for people who work in certain types of jobs. Do you currently or have you ever worked in any of the following?

SHOW CARD A

X2 Do any of your family or close relatives work in any of the following?

SHOW CARD A

X3 Do any of your friends work in any of the following?

SHOW CARD A

	X1	X2	X3
Advertising Agencies/Publicity/Creative and Design Agencies/Consultancies	1	1	1
Journalism (TV/Press/Radio), Media Independents/Publishing	2	2	2
Public Relations	3	3	3
Marketing/Sales Promotion/ Outdoor specialists (i.e. Poster Advertising)	4	4	4
Market Research	5	5	5
National Politics	6	6	6
Television or radio	7	7	7
None of these	8	8	8

CLOSE IF ANY OF THE ABOVE OCCUPATIONS CODED

QA Have you ever attended a market research group discussion / depth interview before?

YES	1	GO TO QB
NO	2	GO TO Q1 (min 3 per group)

QB How many market research group discussions/ depth interviews have you ever attended?

ONE	1	
TWO	2	
MORE THAN 2	3	DO NOT RECRUIT

QC When was the last time you attended a group discussion / depth interview?

LESS THAN 6 MONTHS AGO	1	DO NOT RECRUIT
MORE THAN 6 MONTHS AGO	2	

QD On what subjects was/were the group discussion(s) / depth interviews you attended?

DO NOT RECRUIT ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN INTERVIEWED ON THE SUBJECT OF TELEVISION/MEDIA

SCREENING QUESTIONS

Q1 Which of the following best describes you?

I have children who live at home		Go to Q2
I have children but they have left home		Recruit to no children groups where relevant
I do not have children		Recruit to no children groups

Q2 **[Parents with at home children only]** What age is your oldest child?

Under 6		Recruit mix for parents of younger children groups (at least 3 of each category – ideally 5 of each)
Aged between 6 and 11		
Aged between 12 and 15		Recruit mix for parents of older children groups (at least 3 of each category – ideally 5 of each)
Age 16-17		

Q3 What type of television do you have on your main TV set at home?

Channel 1-4 / 1-5 only		Recruit 1 or 2
Freeview (BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, Channel 4, Five and a range of digital channels including BBC Three, BBC Four, E4 etc)		Recruit at least 3
Cable (Virgin, Telewest, NTL)		Recruit mix of Sky + cable (at least 3 per group)
Sky		
No TV at home		CLOSE

Q4 How often do you watch television at home?

Every day		Recruit some of all categories for all groups. Ensure <u>not more than 2 per group</u> who watch once a week or less.
Most days		
Once a week		
Less than once a week		
Never		CLOSE

Q5. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
a. It is up to individuals to decide whether the programmes they watch are suitable for themselves						
b. There should be tighter restrictions on the sort of programmes that are shown on television						
c. After the watershed all language is acceptable on television						
d. I think there is too much violence on television						
e. I have never been offended by anything I have seen on television						

Please recruit a mix of positive and negative answers to a, c, and e and a mix of positive and negative answers to b and d; but not necessarily one of each per group

Q6. How would you describe your ethnic background? Recruiter to record relevant codes

WHITE:		Recruit to quota
British	1	
Irish	2	
Any other White background	3	
MIXED:		
White and Black Caribbean	4	
White and Black African	5	
White and Asian	6	
Any Other Mixed Background		
ASIAN or ASIAN BRITISH		
Indian	7	
Pakistani	8	
Bangladeshi	9	
Any other Asian background	X	
BLACK or BLACK BRITISH		
Caribbean	Y	
African	0	
Any other Black background	1	
CHINESE OR OTHER ETHNIC GROUP		
Chinese	2	
Other Ethnic Group	3	

RECRUITER ENSURE THAT RESPONDENT CAN COMMUNICATE COMFORTABLY IN ENGLISH FOR THE DURATION OF THE DISCUSSION

AT END OF RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE:-

RECRUITER SAY:

The group discussion / depth interview will take place on (date) at (time) and will take place at (venue)..... It will last three hours. We will give you a DVD to watch at home ahead of the groups and a questionnaire to fill in. This will take around 2 hours to complete. You will receive £... as a token of our appreciation of your time and help.

The group discussion / depth interview will be (AS APPROPRIATE) audio-taped / observed by someone with an interest in this research – for example from the company for whom it is being conducted / taking place in a viewing facility, where one or more people who have an interest in this research will be able to see you and hear what you say.

The answers you give will form part of a confidential market research study. They will be analysed along with those of many others and will never be linked back to you personally. The results will be used solely for the purposes of this Market Research Study.

Before you agree to take part, we need to give you some information about the topic of the research. We are conducting this research on behalf of Ofcom, the communications regulator. Ofcom are responsible for ensuring that television and radio programmes comply with a set of broadcasting standards, including rules on the use of offensive language. This research is designed to get an understanding of what members of the public feel is acceptable language and what is not acceptable on television and radio, in what context, and the reasons why you feel the way you do.

This research will require that, prior to the group discussion, you watch a DVD showing clips of television and radio programming that some people found to be offensive . The words that will be shown and discussed relate to body parts, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental and physical conditions, race and religion, as well as more general offensive language. All of the clips on the DVD have already been broadcast on TV and radio. We want to make sure you are aware of the material that will be discussed, and agree to take part on that basis.

Do you agree to participate in the research?

Yes	1	
No	2	Close

Thank you very much for your help with this study. I will contact you a day or 2 before the group / depth to confirm that you are still able to attend. You ***will*** also receive a phone call from our Quality Control department who will be asking you all the questions again to check that the recruitment has been carried out correctly. Please note that you will be unable to attend the group / depth (as appropriate) unless this re-screening has occurred and once this has been done you will be sent your invitation and if appropriate your homework task.

Your details will be held electronically for internal administration purposes.

FINALLY:-

Do you give permission for us to pass your name and telephone (mobile / landline) contact details onto the researcher in case they need to contact you in the event of non arrival at the interview?

Yes	1	
No	2	Close

Can we contact you again in the future about this study?

	Yes	1
	No	2

Can we contact you again in the future about other market research studies we may be conducting?

	Yes	1
	No	2

Appendix 5: Definitions and sources for recruitment question design and sample specification for research with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, traveller and disability audiences

Lesbian/gay/bisexual people

We used the ONS Harmonised Questions from 'Measuring Sexual Identity: A guide for researchers'.

Transgender people

There are no Harmonised Questions available for this group via ONS. We therefore used questions from a survey being conducted by Scotland's LGBT Domestic Abuse Project in conjunction with Stonewall Scotland and the Scottish Transgender Alliance. <http://www.lgbtdomesticabuse.org.uk/service-users/what-is-domestic-abuse/domestic-abuse-info-and-research/transgender-domestic-abuse-research.htm>

Travellers

There are no Harmonised Questions available for this group via ONS. We have therefore drafted questions based on/reflecting:

- The definition of gypsies and travellers set out in the Housing Act 2004 and used by Shelter, which is 'Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependent's educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, and all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism and/or caravan dwelling.'
- The fact that Gypsies and Irish travellers are recognised as distinct ethnic groups under the Race Relations Act 1989.

Disabled people

We used the ONS Harmonised Questions to establish whether someone is disabled. We used an adapted version of a question used in Ofcom's residential tracking study to determine the type of disability. For learning disabilities, we also checked whether the impairments have been present from childhood, not acquired as a result of accident or following the onset of adult illness as this is noted as a key part of the definition of learning disability by both the British Institute of Learning Disabilities and The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities.

Family members of disabled people

We used the same questions as for disabled people to gather information about the person they provide care for. In addition, we also asked participants to tell us the names of any conditions/illnesses to enable us to identify people with a family member with Down's Syndrome. We established the level of learning disability using the intellectual impairment scale based on IQ (referenced by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities and The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities).

Appendix 6: Recruitment questionnaire (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, traveller and disability audiences)

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. What is the occupation of the member of your household with the largest income?
(Chief Income Earner)

Position

Industry

Skill/Qualification

If Retired, Previous Occupation?

If Self-Employed/Managerial, How many employees responsible for?

If Civil Service/Armed Forces, What grade, what rank?

2. Social Class of Chief Income Earner

- A.....1
B.....2
C1.....3
C2.....4
D.....5
E.....6

3. Age last birthday

Write in here:

- 18 – 20.....1
20 – 30.....2
30 – 45.....3
45 – 55.....4
56 – 64.....5
65 – 756

4. Sex

- Male1
- Female2

N.B. DO NOT ASK THIS QUESTION FOR RESPONDENTS BEING RECRUITED FOR TRANSGENDER GROUPS/DEPTHS

5. Work Status

- Work full time1
- Work part time.....2
- Student3
- Not working nor seeking work4
- Unemployed5

6. Marital Status

- Single - living at home with parents..... 1
- Single - moved away from parents..... 2
- Married/cohabiting 3
- Separated/widowed/divorced 4

7. Occupation of Respondent

8. Type/Method of Recruitment

- Street 1
- In-home 2
- At place of work..... 3
- From list..... 4
- Recruiter's contact / panel..... 5
- Face to Face..... 6
- Telephone..... 7
- Other (specify) 8

9. UK Nationality

Have you been Resident in the UK for longer than 12 months?

- Yes 1
- No 2

CLOSE IF NO

INTRODUCTION

Good morning/ afternoon/ evening. I am from Synovate, an independent market research organisation, and we are conducting some group discussions / depth interviews about television, radio and language used on these. This is on behalf of Ofcom, the communications regulator. We're interested in a range of views.

Can I ask you a few questions? It will take approximately ... minutes.

X1 We are looking for people who work in certain types of jobs. Do you currently or have you ever worked in any of the following?

SHOW CARD B

X2 Do any of your family or close relatives work in any of the following?

SHOW CARD B

X3 Do any of your friends work in any of the following?

SHOW CARD B

	X1	X2	X3
Advertising Agencies/Publicity/Creative and Design Agencies/Consultancies	1	1	1
Journalism (TV/Press/Radio), Media Independents/Publishing	2	2	2
Public Relations	3	3	3
Marketing/Sales Promotion/ Outdoor specialists (i.e. Poster Advertising)	4	4	4
Market Research	5	5	5
National Politics	6	6	6
Television or radio	7	7	7
None of these	8	8	8

CLOSE IF ANY OF THE ABOVE OCCUPATIONS CODED

QA Have you ever attended a market research group discussion / depth interview before?

YES	1	GO TO QB
NO	2	GO TO Q1 (min 3 per group)

QB How many market research group discussions/ depth interviews have you ever attended?

ONE	1	
TWO	2	
MORE THAN 2	3	DO NOT RECRUIT

QC When was the last time you attended a group discussion / depth interview?

LESS THAN 6 MONTHS AGO	1	DO NOT RECRUIT
MORE THAN 6 MONTHS AGO	2	

QD On what subjects was/were the group discussion(s) / depth interviews you attended?

DO NOT RECRUIT ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN INTERVIEWED ON THE SUBJECT OF TELEVISION/MEDIA

QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED OF ALL RESPONDENTS

Q1 Which of the following best describes you?

I have children who live at home	1
I have children but they have left home	2
I do not have children	3

Q2 **[Parents with at home children only]** What age is your oldest child?

Under 6	1
Aged between 6 and 11	2
Aged between 12 and 15	3
Age 16-17	4

Q3 What type of television do you have on your main TV set at home?

Channel 1-4 / 1-5 only	1	CONTINUE
Freeview (BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, Channel 4, Five and a range of digital channels including BBC Three, BBC Four, E4 etc)	2	CONTINUE
Cable (Virgin, Telewest, NTL)	3	CONTINUE
Sky	4	CONTINUE
No TV at home	5	CLOSE

Q4 How often do you watch television at home?

Every day	1	ALL RESPONDENTS TO WATCH ONCE A WEEK OR MORE OFTEN
Most days	2	
Once a week	3	
Less than once a week	4	
Never	5	CLOSE

Q5. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
a. It is up to individuals to decide whether the programmes they watch are suitable for themselves						
b. There should be tighter restrictions on the sort of programmes that are shown on television						
c. After the watershed all language is acceptable on television						
d. I think there is too much violence on television						
e. I have never been offended by anything I have seen on television						

Please recruit a mix of positive and negative answers to a, c, and e and a mix of positive and negative answers to b and d; but not necessarily one of each per group

Q6. How would you describe your ethnic background? Recruiter to record relevant codes

WHITE:	
British	1
Irish	2
Any other White background	3
MIXED:	
White and Black Caribbean	4
White and Black African	5
White and Asian	6
Any Other Mixed Background	
ASIAN or ASIAN BRITISH	
Indian	7
Pakistani	8
Bangladeshi	9
Any other Asian background	X
BLACK or BLACK BRITISH	
Caribbean	Y
African	0
Any other Black background	1
CHINESE OR OTHER ETHNIC GROUP	
Chinese	2
Other Ethnic Group	3

RECRUITER ENSURE THAT RESPONDENT CAN COMMUNICATE COMFORTABLY IN ENGLISH FOR THE DURATION OF THE DISCUSSION

READ OUT BEFORE ASKING ANY OF THE REMAINING QUESTIONS:

We want to make sure we include people with a range of different views, background and experience in this research. The next few questions are designed to ensure that we make sure we are including a good range of people.

QUESTION 7 TO BE ASKED OF ALL RESPONDENTS BEING RECRUITED FOR LESBIAN/GAY/BISEXUAL GROUPS³⁴

ASK Q7 IF RECRUITING FACE-TO-FACE

Q7 ***INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION: GIVE SHOWCARD TO RESPONDENT THEN ASK:***
Which of the options on this card best describes how you think of yourself?
Please just read out the number next to the description

27.	Heterosexual / Straight	1	CLOSE
21.	Gay / Lesbian	2	RECRUIT AS APPROPRIATE
24.	Bisexual	3	RECRUIT AS APPROPRIATE (NO MORE THAN TWO PER GROUP)
29.	Other	4	CLOSE
	DO NOT SHOW ON CARD Don't know/refused	5	CLOSE

FOR EACH GROUP, PLEASE RECRUIT A SPREAD OF AGE AND SEG

QUESTIONS 9 – 12 TO BE ASKED OF ALL RESPONDENTS BEING RECRUITED FOR GROUPS/DEPTHS WITH DISABLED PEOPLE³⁵

Q9 Do you have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity? By long-standing I mean anything that has troubled you over a period of time or is likely to affect you over a period of time?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	CLOSE

³⁴ Question taken from the ONS Harmonised Questions Publication: Measuring Sexual Identity – A Guide For Researchers

³⁵ Questions 9 and 10 are ONS Harmonised Questions on General Health and Carers. Question 11 is adapted from the Ofcom Technology Tracking Study. Q12 reflects the definitions of learning disability used by The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities and British Institute of Learning Disabilities

Q10 Does this illness or disability (Do any of these illnesses or disabilities) limit your activities in any way?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	CLOSE

Q11 Which of these, if any, describe this illness or disability?
SHOW CARD/READ OUT AS APPROPRIATE FOR RECRUITMENT METHOD
CAN MULTICODE

Breathlessness or chest pains	1	
Poor vision, partial sight or blindness	2	
Difficulty in speaking or communicating	3	
Poor hearing, partial deafness or deafness	4	
Cannot walk at all/use a wheelchair	5	RECRUIT FOR DEPTH WITH PERSON WITH MOBILITY DIFFICULTIES
Cannot walk far or manage stairs or can only do so with difficulty	6	
Limited ability to reach	7	
Mental health problems or difficulties	8	RECRUIT FOR DEPTH WITH PERSON WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION
Learning disability	9	ASK Q12a
Other health problems which limit your daily activities or the work that you can do: WRITE IN _____	10	
None	11	
Refused	12	

Q12a Which of these statements best describes your learning disability?
SHOW CARD/READ OUT AS APPROPRIATE FOR RECRUITMENT METHOD

I have had a learning disability since childhood	1	RECRUIT FOR DEPTH WITH PERSON WITH LEARNING DISABILITY
I acquired a learning disability following an accident / illness as an adult	2	

Q12b Can you tell me the names of any specific illnesses, condition or disorder that you have been diagnosed with?
WRITE IN RESPONSE BELOW

EITHER DEPTH 3 OR DEPTH 6 TO INVOLVE A PERSON WITH DOWN'S SYNDROME OR FAMILY MEMBER OF A PERSON WITH DOWN'S SYNDROME

QUESTIONS 13 – 19 TO BE ASKED OF ALL RESPONDENTS BEING RECRUITED FOR GROUPS/DEPTHS WITH FAMILY MEMBERS OF DISABLED PEOPLE³⁶

Q13 Does anyone in your family have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity? By long-standing I mean anything that has troubled them over a period of time or is likely to affect them over a period of time?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	CLOSE

Q14 Does this illness or disability (Do any of these illnesses or disabilities) limit their activities in any way?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	CLOSE

Q15 Which of these best describes your relationship with the person in your family with a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity?

He/she is my spouse/partner	1	
He/she is my child	2	RECRUIT AT LEAST 2 PEOPLE WHO PROVIDE CARE FOR THEIR CHILD
He/she is my parent	3	
He/she is my grandchild	4	
He/she is my brother/sister	5	
Other relative: STATE WHICH	6	

³⁶ Questions 13 and 14 are adapted from the ONS Harmonised Questions on General Health and Carers. Question 16 is adapted from the Ofcom Residential Tracking Study. Questions 17 and 18 reflect the definitions of learning disability used by The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities and British Institute of Learning Disabilities.

Q16 Which of these, if any, describe this illness or disability?
SHOW CARD/READ OUT AS APPROPRIATE FOR RECRUITMENT METHOD
CAN MULTICODE

Breathlessness or chest pains	1	
Poor vision, partial sight or blindness	2	
Difficulty in speaking or communicating	3	
Poor hearing, partial deafness or deafness	4	
Cannot walk at all/use a wheelchair	5	RECRUIT FOR DEPTH WITH PERSON WITH MOBILITY DIFFICULTIES
Cannot walk far or manage stairs or can only do so with difficulty	6	
Limited ability to reach	7	
Mental health problems or difficulties	8	RECRUIT FOR DEPTH WITH PERSON WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION
Learning disability	9	ASK Q17
Other health problems which limit your daily activities or the work that you can do: WRITE IN _____	10	
None	11	
Refused	12	

ASK PEOPLE WITH A FAMILY MEMBER WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY

Q17 Which of these statements best describes the learning disability?
SHOW CARD/READ OUT AS APPROPRIATE FOR RECRUITMENT METHOD

The person has had a learning disability since childhood	1	CONTINUE
The person acquired a learning disability following an accident / illness as an adult	2	CLOSE

ASK PEOPLE WITH A FAMILY MEMBER WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY

Q18 And which of these classifications would best describe the learning disability?
SHOW CARD/READ OUT AS APPROPRIATE FOR RECRUITMENT METHOD

Mild learning disability	1	
Moderate learning disability	2	
Severe learning disability	3	CONTINUE
Profound learning disability	4	

ASK PEOPLE WITH A FAMILY MEMBER WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY

Q19 Can you tell me the names of any specific illnesses, condition or disorder that the person/people you provide care for has been diagnosed with?
WRITE IN RESPONSE BELOW

EITHER DEPTH 3 OR DEPTH 6 TO INVOLVE A PERSON WITH DOWN'S SYNDROME OR FAMILY MEMBER OF A PERSON WITH DOWN'S SYNDROME

QUESTIONS 20-21 TO BE ASKED OF ALL RESPONDENTS BEING RECRUITED FOR TRANSGENDER GROUPS/DEPTHS³⁷

Q20 Have you ever identified as a transgender person or trans person?

READ OUT IF NECESSARY: We use the terms 'transgender' and 'trans' as inclusive umbrella terms for a diverse range of people who find their gender identity or gender expression differs in some way from the gender they were labelled at birth.

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	
Don't know	3	

Q21 Do you consider yourself to be within any of the following categories?
CAN MULTICODE

Woman with a transsexual background	1	RECRUIT FOR MALE TO FEMALE TRANSGENDER GROUP
Man with a transsexual background	2	RECRUIT FOR FEMALE TO MALE TRANSGENDER DEPTH
Male to female/trans woman	3	RECRUIT FOR MALE TO FEMALE TRANSGENDER GROUP
Male to female/trans man	4	RECRUIT FOR FEMALE TO MALE TRANSGENDER DEPTH
Intersex person	5	CLOSE
Androgyne / polygender / genderqueer person	6	CLOSE
Cross-dressing / transvestite person	7	CLOSE
Other type of gender variant person	8	CLOSE

³⁷ Questions 20 and 21 are taken from a current survey being run by the Scottish Transgender Alliance.

QUESTION 22 TO BE ASKED OF ALL RESPONDENTS BEING RECRUITED FOR TRAVELLER GROUPS³⁸

Q22 Do you consider yourself to be within any of the following categories?

Irish Traveller	1	
Gypsy	2	
A person with a nomadic habit of life*	3	
A person with a cultural tradition of nomadism and/or caravan dwelling	4	
None of the above	5	CLOSE

*Please note that this can still apply to you if you have stopped travelling because of education needs, ill health or old age, either your own, other people in your family or other dependents.

AT END OF RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE:-

RECRUITER SAY:

The group discussion / depth interview will take place on (date) at (time) and will take place at (venue)..... It will last two hours/1.5 hours. We will give you a DVD to watch at home ahead of the groups and a questionnaire to fill in. This will take around 2 hours to complete.

NOTE TO RECRUITER; FOR DEPTHS 3 AND 5-7, IF PARTICIPANTS ARE NOT ABLE TO WATCH ALL CLIPS THERE WILL BE AN OPTION TO WATCH A SMALLER NUMBER OF CLIPS INSTEAD.

You will receive £... as a token of our appreciation of your time and help.

The group discussion / depth interview will be (AS APPROPRIATE) audio-taped / observed by someone with an interest in this research – for example from the company for whom it is being conducted / taking place in a viewing facility, where one or more people who have an interest in this research will be able to see you and hear what you say.

The answers you give will form part of a confidential market research study. They will be analysed along with those of many others and will never be linked back to you personally. The results will be used solely for the purposes of this Market Research Study.

FOR GROUPS 1-5, DEPTHS 1, 2, 5-7

Before you agree to take part, we need to give you some information about the topic of the research. We are conducting this research on behalf of Ofcom, the communications regulator. Ofcom are responsible for ensuring that television and radio programmes comply with a set of broadcasting standards, including rules on the use of offensive language. This research is designed to get an understanding of what members of the public feel is acceptable language and what is not acceptable on television and radio, in what context, and the reasons why you feel the way you do.

This research will require that, prior to the group discussion, you watch a DVD showing clips of television and radio programming that some people found to be offensive . The words that will be shown and discussed relate to body parts, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental and physical conditions, race

³⁸ Question 22 is based on the definition of gypsies and travellers used in the 2004 Housing Act and distinct ethnic groups recognised in the 1989 Race Relations Act .

and religion, as well as more general offensive language. All of the clips on the DVD have already been broadcast on TV and radio. We want to make sure you are aware of the material that will be discussed, and agree to take part on that basis.

FOR DEPTH 3

Before you agree to take part, we want to tell you more about the research. The research is for Ofcom, the communications regulator. Part of their job is making sure that television and radio programmes follow rules on the use of offensive language. We want to hear about what words and language you think is okay, or not okay, to have on television and radio. We'd like to know why you feel the way you do.

We would like you to watch some clips that we will give you on DVDs before you tell us what you think. These DVDs include clips of television and radio programmes that some people did not like or found offensive. The words used in the clips include things like body parts, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental and physical conditions, race and religion, as well as more general offensive language. All of the clips on the DVD have already been shown on TV or played on the radio. We want to make sure you know about the words and language we will be talking about in the interview before you agree to take part.

NOTE TO RECRUITER: AS WELL AS OBTAINING CONSENT FROM THE DEPTH 3 PARTICIPANT, PLEASE ALSO INVOLVE A FAMILY MEMBER OR CARER IN THE DECISION TO PARTICIPATE FULLY. WE WOULD LIKE A FAMILY MEMBER/CARER TO REVIEW THE DVDS (PARTICULARLY CLIPS 11, 12 AND 14) TO ENSURE THAT THEY WILL NOT CAUSE THE PARTICIPANT DISTRESS TO REVIEW/DISCUSS. PLEASE EXPLAIN TO THE FAMILY MEMBER/CARER:

Some of the clips that we would like [NAME OF PARTICIPANT] to watch and talk about include language that some people found to be offensive. In particular, there are some clips of TV and radio programmes which use words which could be considered offensive to people with physical disabilities and learning disabilities. We want to ensure that taking part in the research does not cause any upset or distress for [NAME OF PARTICIPANT]. Would you be prepared to review the clips before [NAME OF PARTICIPANT] watches them and let us know if you do not think they are suitable or would upset [NAME OF PARTICIPANT]?

OBTAIN CONSENT THEN PLACE DVD AND PRETASK FORM

ASK ALL

Do you agree to participate in the research?

Yes	1	
No	2	Close

Thank you very much for your help with this study. I will contact you a day or 2 before the group / depth to confirm that you are still able to attend. You ***will*** also receive a phone call from our Quality Control department who will be asking you all the questions again to check that the recruitment has been carried out correctly. Please note that you will be unable to attend the group / depth (as appropriate) unless this re-screening has occurred and once this has been done you will be sent your invitation and if appropriate your homework task.

Your details will be held electronically for internal administration purposes.

FINALLY:-

Do you give permission for us to pass your name and telephone (mobile / landline) contact details onto the researcher in case they need to contact you in the event of non arrival at the interview?

Yes	1	
No	2	Close

Can we contact you again in the future about this study?

	Yes	1
	No	2

Can we contact you again in the future about other market research studies we may be conducting?

	Yes	1
	No	2

Appendix 7: Pretask (general UK sample)

Prior to attending the forthcoming group discussion, please take the time to watch through the enclosed DVDs carefully.

There are three DVDs for you to watch:

- TV before 9pm
- TV after 9pm
- Radio Clips

This booklet contains some information about each clip and a number of questions. Please read the information about each clip carefully before you watch it and answer the questions as fully as you can straight after watching each clip. You only need to watch each clip once.

Please send your completed booklet to [Synovate email address] at least two days before the group. If you don't have access to email, please give us a call on [Synovate number] to arrange a time to talk us quickly through your views ahead of the session. Remember to bring the completed booklet with you to the group discussion.

Important! Please check all three DVDs as soon as you receive them to make sure you can play them at home and contact us as soon as possible if you have any problems.

Thank you for helping us with this research,

The Synovate team for Ofcom.

Your name: _____

General Questions

Please answer these questions before you watch the clips. These questions do not refer to any of the clips but are to find out about your general attitudes towards television and radio and language use.

1. What television/radio programming do you particularly enjoy?

2. What television/radio programming do you particularly dislike?

3. Thinking about television and radio, what concerns, if any, do you have about what you see and hear?

4. Have you ever been personally offended by language used on television or radio? What was it and how did it make you feel?

**DVD 1: Pre-Watershed:
Clips from TV programmes shown
before 9pm**

Clip number 1:

The X-Factor, ITV1, Saturday at 7.30pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

The X-Factor is a singing contest to find the next big pop artist. It appeals to a wide range of viewers. Contestants go through a range of auditions and sing in front of four judges. If they get through the auditions, contestants sing at the live finals during which the public vote for their favourite act.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 2:

***Stylista* trailer, Five, broadcast over a two week period at various times between 4.00pm and 7.00pm (weekday and weekends)**

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

This is a trailer for the programme *Stylista*. This particular clip shows the trailer as broadcast on Sunday at 4pm.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 3:

Hollyoaks, Channel 4, Monday at 6.30pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Hollyoaks is a soap set around a fictional Chester suburb, aimed at a teen and young adult audience. The characters are generally in their late teens or early twenties and the storylines often tackle difficult issues, for example drug addiction, homelessness, racism, homosexuality, and rape. Two of the characters are Gez who is a known and disliked bully, and Anita who is struggling with her sense of identity.

There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown:

“...in Hollyoaks first, Gez continues to bully Anita”

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 4:

The Simpsons, Sky One, Sunday at 5.30pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

The Simpsons is a long running American animated television sitcom designed to appeal to a wide range of viewers. The programme pokes fun at middle class American lifestyles.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 5:

F1: Canadian Grand Prix Live, ITV1, Sunday at 5.05pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

This is live sports coverage of commentator Martin Brundle's grid walk, which takes place before the start of each Grand Prix. During the grid walk Martin tries to get last minute interviews with drivers and other personalities in Formula One.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 6:

Top Gear (1), BBC 2, Sunday at 8.00pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Top Gear is a long running entertainment series about cars. This is often light hearted and contains banter between the three presenters. This tends to appeal to men, but also some children.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 7:

Top Gear (2), BBC 2, Sunday at 8.00pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Top Gear is a long running entertainment series about cars. This is often light hearted and contains banter between the three presenters. This tends to appeal to men, but also some children.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 8:

Coronation Street

ITV1, Sunday at 7.30pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Coronation Street is a long running British soap set in Manchester, and is watched by a broad range of people. This particular clip features a heated argument between some of the well known female characters who live on the street.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

**DVD 2: Post-Watershed:
Clips from TV programmes shown
after 9pm**

Clip number 9:

Big Brother, series 8, Channel 4, Wednesday at 10.00pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Big Brother is a reality programme. "Housemates" live together in a specially designed house where they are recorded by cameras and microphones at all times and they are not allowed any contact with the outside world. The housemates try to win a cash prize by avoiding evictions from the house.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 10:

Ramsay's Great British Nightmare

Channel 4, Friday between 9.00pm and 11.00pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Ramsay's Great British Nightmare is a reality series which shows well known TV chef Gordon Ramsay helping some of Britain's struggling restaurants.

There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown:
“strong language from the start and throughout”.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 11:

Free Agents

Channel 4, Friday at 10.00pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Free Agents is a sitcom set in a glamorous talent agency about an on-off romance between two people. The programme was shown at a time that is normally used for comedy on this channel.

There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown: was “a new comedy...with very strong language and adult humour and content from the start and throughout...”

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 12:

Moving Wallpaper

ITV1, Friday at 9.00pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Moving Wallpaper is a comedy drama set in a television production office run by an egotistical television producer. This episode was part of the second series and shows the producer working under pressure to make a hit programme after the failure of his last show.

There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown:
“...which has strong language”.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 13:

Never Mind the Buzzcocks

BBC2, Thursday at 9.30pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Never Mind the Buzzcocks is a comedy pop quiz, with guest competitors from music, TV and comedy.

**There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown
“...and with some strong language, who’s calling the tune this week?”**

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

DVD 3: Radio Clips

Clip number 14:

Nemone

BBC 6 Music, Friday at 1.00pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

This is a daily magazine programme hosted by the DJ Nemone Metaxas. The station is aimed at 25 to 44-year-olds. The main focus of this programme is music, but sometimes this has other guests from the world of entertainment. This programme had an interview with American stand-up comedian Doug Stanhope.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 15:

Lennon, the Wenner tapes

BBC Radio 4, Friday at 9.00am

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

This is an in-depth view of John Lennon, told through a famous 1970 New York interview for Rolling Stone magazine.

The advertisements for the programme were broadcast five times the preceding week and on the morning of the programme. These said: “Last year Radio 4 broadcast a frank and revealing interview with John Lennon” and the trail also said it contained “frequent swearing”. Before the programme, a voice over said “Recorded with Yoko at his side and with strong language throughout”.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 16:

Britney Spears "If U Seek Amy"

Kiss 100, Monday at 2.00pm approx

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

This song is a pop song by Britney Spears. Kiss 100 is a London based radio station which broadcasts hip hop, R&B, urban, and dance music.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Appendix 8: Pretask (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, traveller and disability audiences)

N.B. Slightly amended versions of the introductory text were used for the depths with family members of disabled people and the depth with a person with a learning disability. These versions are included in the subsequent appendices.

Pre-group task

We are conducting this research on behalf of Ofcom, the communications regulator. Ofcom are responsible for ensuring that television and radio programmes comply with a set of broadcasting standards, including rules on the use of offensive language. This research is designed to get an understanding of what members of the public feel is acceptable language and what is not acceptable on television and radio, in what context, and the reasons why you feel the way you do.

Prior to attending the forthcoming group discussion, please take the time to watch through the enclosed DVDs carefully. There are three DVDs for you to watch:

- TV before 9pm
- TV after 9pm
- Radio Clips

These DVDs include clips of television and radio programming that some people found to be offensive. The words used in the clips relate to body parts, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental and physical conditions, race and religion, as well as more general offensive language. All of the clips on the DVD have already been broadcast on TV and radio. We want to make sure you are aware of the nature of these clips before you watch the DVDs.

This booklet contains some information about each clip and a number of questions. Please read the information about each clip carefully before you

watch it and answer the questions as fully as you can straight after watching each clip. You only need to watch each clip once.

Please send your completed booklet to [Synovate email address] at least two days before the group. If you don't have access to email, please give us a call on [Synovate number] to arrange a time to talk us quickly through your views ahead of the session. Remember to bring the completed booklet with you to the group discussion. If you have any concerns or questions, please call the Synovate team on [Synovate number].

Important! Please check all three DVDs as soon as you receive them to make sure you can play them at home and contact us as soon as possible if you have any problems.

Thank you for helping us with this research,

The Synovate team for Ofcom.

Your name: _____

General Questions

Please answer these questions before you watch the clips. These questions do not refer to any of the clips but are to find out about your general attitudes towards television and radio and language use.

1. What television/radio programming do you particularly enjoy?

2. What television/radio programming do you particularly dislike?

3. Thinking about television and radio, what concerns, if any, do you have about what you see and hear?

4. Have you ever been personally offended by language used on television or radio? What was it and how did it make you feel?

**DVD 1: Pre-Watershed:
Clips from TV programmes shown
before 9pm**

Clip number 1:

Hollyoaks, Channel 4, Monday at 6.30pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Hollyoaks is a soap set around a fictional Chester suburb, aimed at a teen and young adult audience. The characters are generally in their late teens or early twenties and the storylines often tackle difficult issues, for example drug addiction, homelessness, racism, homosexuality, and rape. Two of the characters are Gez who is a known and disliked bully, and Anita who is struggling with her sense of identity.

There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown:

“...in Hollyoaks first, Gez continues to bully Anita”

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 2:

F1: Canadian Grand Prix Live, ITV1, Sunday at 5.05pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

This is live sports coverage of commentator Martin Brundle's grid walk, which takes place before the start of each Grand Prix. During the grid walk Martin tries to get last minute interviews with drivers and other personalities in Formula One.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 3:

Top Gear (1), BBC 2, Sunday at 8.00pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Top Gear is a long running entertainment series about cars. This is often light hearted and contains banter between the three presenters. This tends to appeal to men, but also some children.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 4:

Top Gear (2), BBC 2, Sunday at 8.00pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Top Gear is a long running entertainment series about cars. This is often light hearted and contains banter between the three presenters. This tends to appeal to men, but also some children.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 5:

Coronation Street

ITV1, Sunday at 7.30pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Coronation Street is a long running British soap set in Manchester, and is watched by a broad range of people. This particular clip features a heated argument between some of the well known female characters who live on the street.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 6:

My Wife and Kids

Virgin 1, Tuesday at 5.30pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

My Wife and Kids is an American sitcom about a husband and modern-day head of the family who rules his household with a distinct parenting style. He teaches his three children some of life's lessons with his own brand of humour, wisdom, and discipline.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

**DVD 2: Post-Watershed:
Clips from TV programmes shown
after 9pm**

Clip number 7:

Big Brother, series 8, Channel 4, Wednesday at 10.00pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Big Brother is a reality programme. "Housemates" live together in a specially designed house where they are recorded by cameras and microphones at all times and they are not allowed any contact with the outside world. The housemates try to win a cash prize by avoiding evictions from the house.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 8:

Ramsay's Great British Nightmare

Channel 4, Friday between 9.00pm and 11.00pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Ramsay's Great British Nightmare is a reality series which shows well known TV chef Gordon Ramsay helping some of Britain's struggling restaurants.

**There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown:
"strong language from the start and throughout".**

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 9:

Free Agents

Channel 4, Friday at 10.00pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Free Agents is a sitcom set in a glamorous talent agency about an on-off romance between two people. The programme was shown at a time that is normally used for comedy on this channel.

There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown: was “a new comedy...with very strong language and adult humour and content from the start and throughout...”

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 10:

Moving Wallpaper

ITV1, Friday at 9.00pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Moving Wallpaper is a comedy drama set in a television production office run by an egotistical television producer. This episode was part of the second series and shows the producer working under pressure to make a hit programme after the failure of his last show.

There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown:
“...which has strong language”.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 11:

Never Mind the Buzzcocks

BBC2, Thursday at 9.30pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Never Mind the Buzzcocks is a comedy pop quiz, with guest competitors from music, TV and comedy.

**There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown
“...and with some strong language, who’s calling the tune this week?”**

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 12:

The Inbetweeners

E4, Thursday at 10.35pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

The Inbetweeners is a comedy about a group of boys struggling through sixth form. It is aimed at older teens and young adults. This episode was originally broadcast on E4 at 22:35 and repeated on Channel 4 at 22:50.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Clip number 13:

Most Annoying People of the Year

BBC Three, Saturday at 9.35pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

Most Annoying People of the year is a review of people and events that made the headlines during 2008. It was presented in the format of a “chart” countdown and featured contributors from the world of comedy and entertainment talking about who and what really annoyed them during 2008.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

DVD 3: Radio Clips

Clip number 14:

Nemone

BBC 6 Music, Friday at 1.00pm

Please read this description before you watch the clip:

This is a daily magazine programme hosted by the DJ Nemone Metaxas. The station is aimed at 25 to 44-year-olds. The main focus of this programme is music, but sometimes this has other guests from the world of entertainment. This programme had an interview with American stand-up comedian Doug Stanhope.

Please answer these questions after you have watched the clip:

1. How do you feel about the language used in this clip?

Please give as much detail as possible about the specific words or content which makes you say that.

2. Why do you feel that way?

Please think about the reasons why this language is suitable/unsuitable.

Appendix 9: Pretask introductory text (person with a learning disability)

We are doing some research on behalf of Ofcom, the communications regulator. Part of their job is making sure that television and radio programmes follow rules on the use of offensive language. We want to hear about your views on what language is acceptable on television and radio and what is not, and the reasons why you feel the way you do.

Before we meet, we'd like you to watch some clips on the three DVDs we have given you:

- TV before 9pm
- TV after 9pm
- Radio Clips

These DVDs include clips of television and radio programmes that some people found offensive. The words used in the clips relate to body parts, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental and physical conditions, race and religion, as well as more general offensive language. All of the clips on the DVD have already been shown on TV or played on the radio. We want to make sure you know about the language used in these clips before you watch them.

This booklet has some information about each clip and some questions. Please read the information about each clip before you watch it and answer the questions straight after watching each clip. You only need to watch each clip once.

Please make sure you watch clips 11 (Nevermind the Buzzcocks), 12 (The Inbetweeners) and 14 (Most Annoying People of the Year). If you are able to watch the other clips too, it will help with our discussion.

If you have any questions, please call us on [Synovate number].

Important! Please check all three DVDs as soon as you get them to make sure you can play them at home. Please call us as soon as possible if you have any problems.

Thank you for helping us with this research,

The Synovate team.

Appendix 10: Pretask introductory text (family members of disabled people)

We are conducting this research on behalf of Ofcom, the communications regulator. Ofcom are responsible for ensuring that television and radio programmes comply with a set of broadcasting standards, including rules on the use of offensive language. This research is designed to get an understanding of what members of the public feel is acceptable language and what is not acceptable on television and radio, in what context, and the reasons why you feel the way you do.

Prior to attending the forthcoming interview, please take the time to watch the clips on the enclosed DVDs carefully. There are three DVDs:

- TV before 9pm
- TV after 9pm
- Radio Clips

These DVDs include clips of television and radio programming that some people found to be offensive. The words used in the clips relate to body parts, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental and physical conditions, race and religion, as well as more general offensive language. All of the clips on the DVD have already been broadcast on TV and radio. We want to make sure you are aware of the nature of these clips before you watch the DVDs.

This booklet contains some information about each clip and a number of questions. Please read the information about each clip carefully before you watch it and answer the questions as fully as you can straight after watching each clip. You only need to watch each clip once.

Please make sure you watch clips 11 (Nevermind the Buzzcocks), 12 (The Inbetweeners) and 14 (Most Annoying People of the Year).. If you are able to watch the other clips too, it will help with our discussion.

If you have any concerns or questions, please call the Synovate team on [Synovate number].



Important! Please check all three DVDs as soon as you receive them to make sure you can play them at home and contact us as soon as possible if you have any problems.

Thank you for helping us with this research,

The Synovate team.

Appendix 11: Discussion guide (general UK sample – group discussions)

Timing	Session
<p>6.30pm 5 mins</p>	<p>Introduction to the research</p> <p>Moderator to introduce themselves and Synovate, MRS code of conduct, confidentiality, audio recording etc</p> <p>Explain the client and purpose of the research:</p> <p><i>Ofcom is the communications regulator for the UK, with responsibility for ensuring that television and radio programmes comply with a set of broadcasting standards, including rules on the use of offensive language. This research is designed to get an understanding of what members of the public feel is acceptable language and what is not acceptable on television and radio, in what context, and the reasons why you feel the way you do. Ofcom will use this research to inform its decisions when it receives complaints about the use of language on television and radio.</i></p> <p><i>This is a potentially sensitive subject and it is important that everyone is honest and openly expresses their views.</i></p> <p><i>We want to understand your own <u>personal</u> views about the issues as an individual, and your views about what is <u>generally</u> acceptable taking into account your views and the views of others. It is important that we are clear about the difference between these two points of view. When you are thinking about what is generally acceptable it is important to know that although everyone has the right to feel personally offended by certain types of language, there is no ban on any term being used, and there can be no ban on offensive material being broadcast. Therefore please bear in mind that when Ofcom consider complaints, they consider that it is acceptable to broadcast language which some people may find offensive as long as it is justified by the context.</i></p> <p>Discuss use of language in the session:</p> <p><i>Given the topic of tonight’s discussion, it is likely that I will use some potentially offensive language during the session as I need to make explore your views on the use of specific words and make sure that everyone is clear which words we are</i></p>

	<p><i>talking about. You may also wish to refer to the words directly in the discussion, even if you find this offensive or would not normally use these or you are welcome to use alternatives, e.g. C-word, F-word, etc.</i></p>
<p>6.35pm 10 minutes</p>	<p>Introductions and warm up</p> <p>Paired introductions – group split into pairs and given two minutes to talk to partner before introducing them back to the group</p>
<p>6.45pm 2 hours 20 mins</p>	<p>Review of clips – c.10 minutes per clip</p> <p><i>Stimulus material:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Edited versions of clips</i> • <i>Grid to collect acceptability scores</i> <p><i>N.B. See below for rotation instructions on the order in which to show the clips in each group.</i></p> <p><i>Review X Factor and Simpsons clips briefly at the end of the Group 1 clips discussion – ask participants to give acceptability scores out of 10 and a brief reason why.</i></p> <p><i>Throughout, check what responses are based on i.e. when discussing participants' personal point of view, double check that this is their personal perspective, not what they see as generally acceptable, and vice versa.</i></p> <p><i>Ask participants to take comfort breaks as required.</i></p> <p>For each clip, remind participants about time and channel of broadcast and any warning given, then show short clip.</p> <p>Then explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal perspective on the clips • Views on generally accepted standards for each clip <p><i>N.B. Reinforce distinction between personal perspective and generally accepted standards as required</i></p> <p>Explore personal perspective on the clip:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you have watched this programme when it was originally shown? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes, who would you have been watching it with?

- When you watched this clip at home, what did you think of it?
 - If language spontaneously mentioned, probe to understand response e.g. Did you find any of the language offensive? If yes, why? If no, why not?

If language not mentioned spontaneously, explore (see below for probe sheet on specific language to explore in each clip):

- How do **you** feel about the language used in this clip? (Clarify as required: I want to understand your personal point of view at this stage, rather than what you see as generally acceptable)
 - Probe in detail on spontaneous answers to understand what is driving the response
 - Probe specifically on the use of the specific words/phrases in each clip e.g. how do you feel about the use of the word 'fuck/gay/Paki' in this clip?

N.B. All discussion should be in the context of how the language is used in this specific clip. Remind participants about channel and time of broadcast and any warning given where relevant in the discussion.

Explore impact of contextual factors as they arise:

- Programme/programme title
- Genre
- Channel/position on EPG
- Broadcaster/platform (i.e. 5 main terrestrial channels vs Sky vs other commercial broadcasters)
- Time of broadcast (N.B. Need to probe around proximity to watershed, particularly strong/repetitive language used just after 9pm)
- Frequency of language used
- Presence of pre-transmission warning
- If children are watching/likely to be watching

For each contextual factor, explore:

- How does the language used fit with this type of programme/a programme shown on this channel/etc?
- Is it the kind of language you would expect to hear on a programme shown at

this time/a programme of this type/etc?

- If it was a different type of programme/shown at a different time/etc, would it make a difference to your views on the language used?

Additional issues to explore:

- For words with two possible definitions e.g. gay, pikey, retard (which can refer to a minority group or can be used as a general pejorative term, probe on views around how they are being used in this context and whether the way they are used/intended makes a difference to acceptability
- If issues about 'nanny state' or parental responsibility arise spontaneously, probe views further around who is responsible for generally acceptable content and viewing behaviour (e.g. regulators vs broadcasters vs presenters vs technology vs parents)

If any contextual factors do not arise spontaneously, prompt before moving on to discussion about generally accepted standards.

Explore generally accepted standards:

- Thinking about the viewing public as a whole, would you say this language was generally acceptable to use on TV/radio? Why/why not?
- What sorts of people would find this type of language acceptable on TV/radio?
- What sorts of people would find this type of language unacceptable on TV/radio?

N.B. Ensure discussion focuses on use of language on TV/radio, not more generally.

- On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is totally unacceptable and 10 is totally acceptable, how would you rate the use of language in this clip as it was shown, for example at that time, on that channel etc:
 - Thinking about its acceptability on TV or radio from your personal perspective?
 - Thinking about its acceptability on TV or radio for the public generally?
- Write on grid provided then share with group

Repeat for remaining clips. For all clips, listen out for any points/issues which are different from or did not appear in the previous research and probe in detail. (See

	<p><i>end of guide for list of previous issues/findings.) Focus time on these issues rather than those which have been covered in detail in the previous research.</i></p> <p><i>Review X Factor and Simpsons clips briefly after showing other Group 1 clips – ask participants to give acceptability scores out of 10 and a brief reason why.</i></p>
<p>9.05pm 25 mins</p>	<p>Word sort exercise</p> <p>Stimulus materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping cards with offensive words • Grid to collect offensive word response <p><i>During this exercise we will give the respondents mapping cards, each containing the list of 50 offensive words Ofcom wishes to explore. (All words should be used in this exercise).</i></p> <p><i>As a group, thinking about what would be generally acceptable in terms of offensive language, before and after 9pm (the watershed), respondents will be asked to group the words:</i></p> <p><i>First - thinking about before 9pm (pre-watershed context)– respondents will be asked to arrange the words along a scale where one end is ‘not generally acceptable’ and the other end is ‘generally acceptable’.</i></p> <p><i>N.B. Ask group to stand up and physically sort the cards (stick on wall if flipcharts/space available or use floor/table)</i></p> <p><i>Moderator will listen to their discussion and then probe the reasons behind their choices in detail. He/she will ask:</i></p> <p>For each grouping of words that occurs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probe on what makes one word or grouping of words more/less acceptable than another e.g. why is ‘shit’ generally more acceptable than ‘fuck’. <p>Note: Probe specifically on the words in bold</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>When do you feel it is acceptable for these words to be used? Programme/programme title, genre, channel/position on EPG, broadcaster/platform (i.e. 5 main terrestrial channels vs Sky vs other commercial broadcasters), time of broadcast (esp. proximity to watershed, frequency of language used, presence of pre-transmission warning, if children are watching/likely to be watching</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When would it be unacceptable? Why • Who would it be unacceptable to? Why <p>(15 mins)</p> <p><i>Moderator must take snapshot of word sort; then ask participants to review the words that are on the 'not generally acceptable' side of the scale pre-watershed in a post-watershed context i.e. where would they be positioned on the scale if used after 9pm. (10 mins)</i></p>
9.30pm	<p>Summary, thanks and close</p>

Grouping of clips into themes:

Group 1: Strong language	
Theme A: Family viewing	Clip 8: Coronation Street
Theme B: Pre-watershed potentially offensive language	Clip 2: Stylista
Theme C: Strong language when children are not particularly likely to be listening	Clip 15: Lennon Radio 4 clip Clip 16: Britney Spears song
Theme D: Post-watershed strong language	Clip 10: Ramsey's Great British Nightmare Clip 11: Free Agents
To cover quickly at the end of the Group 1 discussion	Clip 1: X Factor Clip 4: Simpsons
Group 2: Discriminatory language	
Theme E: Discriminatory language – racism	Clip 3: Hollyoaks Clip 9: Big Brother
Theme F: Discriminatory language – travellers	Clip 5: F1 Canadian Grand Prix Clip 6: Top Gear
Theme G: Discriminatory language – sexuality	Clip 7: Top Gear Clip 12: Moving Wallpaper
Theme H: Discriminatory language – disability	Clip 13: Never Mind The Buzzcocks Clip 14: Nemone

Rotation order

ALL GROUPS TO COVER GROUP 1 CLIPS FIRST

Group/location	Order for groups of clips	Order for Themes	Order for clips within themes
Group 1, No children, aged 18-30, Male, ABC1, White UK, Glasgow	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme A Group 2: Start at Theme E	Start on first clip in each theme
Group 2, No children, aged 18-30, Female, C2DE, White UK and BME, Birmingham	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme D Group 2: Start at Theme H	Start on second clip in each theme
Group 4, Younger children, aged 20-45, Female, ABC1, White UK, Cardiff	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme C Group 2: Start at Theme G	Start on second clip in each theme
Group 5, No children, aged 30-55, Male, ABC1, White UK and BME, Birmingham	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme B Group 2: Start at Theme F	Start on first clip in each theme
Group 6, No children, aged 30-55, Female, C2DE, White UK, Belfast	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme A Group 2: Start at Theme E	Start on second clip in each theme
Group 7, Older children, aged 30-55, Male, C2DE, White UK, Cardiff	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme D Group 2: Start at Theme H	Start on first clip in each theme
Group 8, Older	Start with Group	Group 1: Start at	Start on second clip

children, aged 30-55, Female, ABC1, White UK and BME, Slough	1	Theme D Group 2: Start at Theme H	in each theme
Group 9, No children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, Male, ABC1, White UK, Belfast	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme C Group 2: Start at Theme G	Start on first clip in each theme
Group 10, No children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, Female, C2DE, White UK, Glasgow	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme B Group 2: Start at Theme F	Start on second clip in each theme
Group 3, Younger children, aged 20-45, Male, C2DE, White UK and BME, London		COMPLETED – PILOT GROUP Start at Theme C	Start on first clip in each theme

Probe sheet for moderator on specific language to explore for each clip (not for circulation)

Pre-watershed	Programme details	Specific language to explore
<p>Clip 1 The X-Factor, ITV1, Saturday at 19.30</p>	<p>The X-Factor is a singing contest to find the next big pop artist. It appeals to a wide range of viewers. Contestants go through a range of auditions and sing in front of four judges. If they get through the auditions, contestants sing at the live finals during which the public vote for their favourite act.</p>	<p>Gang bang</p>
<p>Clip 2 Stylista trailer, Five, broadcast over a two week period at various times between 16:00 and 19:00 (weekday and weekends)</p>	<p>This is a trailer for the programme Stylista. This particular clip shows the trailer as broadcast on Sunday at 4pm.</p>	<p>Bitch/bitchy Fucking (partially bleeped)</p>
<p>Clip 3 Hollyoaks, Channel 4, Monday at 18:30</p>	<p>Hollyoaks is a soap set around a fictional Chester suburb, aimed at a teen and young adult audience. The characters are generally in their late teens or early twenties and the storylines often tackle difficult issues, for example drug addiction, homelessness, racism, homosexuality, and rape. Two of the characters are Gez who is a known and disliked bully, and Anita who is struggling with her sense of identity.</p> <p>There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown: "...in Hollyoaks first, Gez continues to bully Anita".</p>	<p>Paki</p>
<p>Clip 4 The Simpsons, Sky One, Sunday at 17:30</p>	<p>The Simpsons is a long running American animated television sitcom designed to appeal to a wide range of viewers. The programme pokes fun at middle class American lifestyles.</p>	<p>Piss away</p>

<p>Clip 5 F1: Canadian Grand Prix Live, ITV1, Sunday at 17:05</p>	<p>This is live sports coverage of commentator Martin Brundle's grid walk, which takes place before the start of each Grand Prix. During the grid walk Martin tries to get last minute interviews with drivers and other personalities in Formula One.</p>	<p>Pikey</p>
<p>Clip 6 Top Gear, BBC 2, Sunday at 20:00</p>	<p>Top Gear is a long running entertainment series about cars. This is often light hearted and contains banter between the three presenters. This tends to appeal to men, but also some children.</p>	<p>Three references to pikey: Pie and key on car bonnet Steak and kidney lock opener Anyone whose business is selling pegs and heather</p>
<p>Clip 7 Top Gear, BBC 2, Sunday at 20:00</p>	<p>Top Gear is a long running entertainment series about cars. This is often light hearted and contains banter between the three presenters. This tends to appeal to men, but also some children.</p>	<p>Gay Ginger beer (queer)</p>
<p>Clip 8 Coronation Street, ITV1, Sunday at 19.30</p>	<p>Coronation Street is a long running British soap set in Manchester, and is watched by a broad range of people. This particular clip features a heated argument between some of the well known female characters who live on the street.</p>	<p>Dirty/cheeky little bitch Stupid/cheeky cow Slut</p>
<p>Post-watershed</p>	<p>Programme details</p>	<p>Specific language to explore</p>
<p>Clip 9 Big Brother, series 8, Channel 4, Wednesday at 22:00</p>	<p>Big Brother is a reality programme. "Housemates" live together in a specially designed house where they are recorded by cameras and microphones at all times and they are not allowed any contact with the outside world. The housemates try to win a cash prize by avoiding evictions from the house.</p>	<p>Nigger</p>
<p>Clip 10</p>	<p>Ramsay's Great British Nightmare is a reality</p>	<p>Fuck and its</p>



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Ramsay's Great British Nightmare, Channel 4, Friday between 21:00 and 23:00	<p>series which shows well known TV chef Gordon Ramsay helping some of Britain's struggling restaurants.</p> <p>There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown: "strong language from the start and throughout".</p>	derivatives
Clip 11 Free Agents, Channel 4, Friday at 22:00	<p>Free Agents is a sitcom set in a glamorous talent agency about an on-off romance between two people. The programme was shown at a time that is normally used for comedy on this channel.</p> <p>There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown: was "a new comedy...with very strong language and adult humour and content from the start and throughout..."</p>	Fuck Cunt
Clip 12 Moving Wallpaper, ITV1, Friday at 21:00	<p>Moving Wallpaper is a comedy drama set in a television production office run by an egotistical television producer. This episode was part of the second series and shows the producer working under pressure to make a hit programme after the failure of his last show.</p> <p>There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown: "...which has strong language".</p>	Cock in a frock Tranny
Clip 13 Never Mind the Buzzcocks, BBC2, Thursday at 21:30	<p>Never Mind the Buzzcocks is a comedy pop quiz, with guest competitors from music, TV and comedy.</p> <p>There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown "...and with some strong language, who's calling the tune this week?"</p>	Retarded

Radio	Programme details	Specific language to explore
Clip 14 Nemone, BBC 6 Music, Friday at 13:00	This is a daily magazine programme hosted by the DJ Nemone Metaxas. The station is aimed at 25 to 44-year-olds. The main focus of this programme is music, but sometimes this has other guests from the world of entertainment. This programme had an interview with American stand-up comedian Doug Stanhope.	Retard (to describe a child with Down's Syndrome)
Clip 15 ³⁹ Lennon, the Wenner tapes, BBC Radio 4, Friday at 09:00	This is an in-depth view of John Lennon, told through a famous 1970 New York interview for Rolling Stone magazine. The advertisements for the programme were broadcast five times the preceding week and on the morning of the programme. These said: "Last year Radio 4 broadcast a frank and revealing interview with John Lennon" and the trail also said it contained "frequent swearing". Before the programme, a voice over said "Recorded with Yoko at his side and with strong language throughout".	Fuck Bastard
Clip 16 Britney Spears "If U Seek Amy", Kiss 100, Monday at 14:00 approx	This song is a pop song by Britney Spears. Kiss 100 is a London based radio station which broadcasts hip hop, R&B, urban, and dance music.	Fuck me (phonetically from song lyric)
Clips in pilot DVD only		
Exposed, Fiver, Tuesday at 17:30	Exposed is an American reality dating show aimed at young adults. A man goes on a date with two women who are competing for his affections. The women are unknowingly being monitored by a lie detector. Originally broadcast on MTV.	Bitch Whore

³⁹ Please see note on page 5 regarding the error in thinking the word 'cunt' was mentioned in the lyrics to the song played in this clip.



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<p>The Inbetweeners, E4, Thursday at 22:35</p>	<p>The Inbetweeners is a Comedy about a group of boys struggling through sixth form. It is aimed at older teens and young adults. This episode was originally broadcast on E4 at 22:35 and repeated on Channel 4 at 22:50.</p> <p>The voice over information preceding transmission was: "strong language" and "adult humour".</p>	<p>Down's Syndrome (to describe someone who is stupid)</p> <p>Gash</p>
<p>Top Gear, BBC 2, Sunday at 20:00</p>	<p>Top Gear is a long running entertainment series about cars. James May and Jeremy Clarkson had just shown two advertising executives a spoof remake of an advertisement for a Volkswagen car which showed a man committing suicide.</p>	<p>Jesus Christ</p>

Key findings from previous research (for moderator use only)

Ofcom 2005 research on offensive language on TV and radio

The main issues raised in previous research which affect the level of offence were:

- The manner in which words are used
 - Expected or unexpected
 - Single or repeated use
 - Part of the storyline or not
 - Relevant to the character or not
 - Relevant to the genre/programme format or not
 - Used by and within a peer group vs used by someone not in the group affected by the word
 - Used to insult/aggressively,

- The listening context
 - Time of broadcast
 - Channel of broadcast
 - Profile of audience, particularly whether children are likely to be watching/listening or if it is family viewing
 - Whether there is a warning (for planned use) or an apology (for mistaken/unexpected use)

- The words/phrases used

Seen as offensive across audience groups	Jesus Fucking Christ, Jesus Shitting Christ, cunt, spastic, cocksucker, motherfucker, fuck/fucking
Offensive to some groups/polarising	Arsehole, cock, pussy, twat, mong, retard, schizo, queer, faggot, dyke, bastard, bitch, dickhead, prickteaser, slag, slut, wanker, whore, bonk, poke, shag

In general not offensive/mild	Bloody, God, Jesus, arse, balls, bollocks, bum, crap, dick, fart, knob, prick, shit, tits, nutter, poof, git, piss off, pissed, sod, bugger, screw
Unknown to most but not offensive to those who know them	Batty boy, bumbu, hoochie
Unknown to most but offensive to those who know them	Blaad claat, chi-chi man, ho, punani

BBC Research 2009: Taste, Standards and the BBC

This research highlights the importance of contextual factors in determining response to strong language and swearing on TV, Key factors are:

- Is it editorially necessary
- Is it part of a genuine emotional outburst and so authentic
- Was it scripted or live
- Who is uttering it and in what tone (more unsettling for some when used in anger or aggression)
- Whether it is excessive or unnecessary

Overall concern about swearing and strong language on the radio is at a relatively low level because the medium is more one-on-one. If strong language is used mistakenly during a live programme and there is an immediate apology, there seems to be a degree of forgiveness. Scripted programmes are more problematic, but can be justified depending on content, warnings etc.

Form for rating each clip

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is totally unacceptable and 10 is totally acceptable, how would you rate the use of language in this clip as it was shown:

Clip	Thinking about its acceptability on TV or radio from your personal perspective?	Thinking about its acceptability on TV or radio for the public generally?
Clip 1: X Factor		
Clip 2: Stylista		
Clip 3: Hollyoaks		
Clip 4: Simpsons		
Clip 5: F1 Canadian Grand Prix		
Clip 6: Top Gear		
Clip 7: Top Gear		
Clip 8: Coronation Street		
Clip 9: Big Brother		
Clip 10: Ramsey's Great British Nightmare		
Clip 11: Free Agents		
Clip 12: Moving Wallpaper		
Clip 13: Never Mind The Buzzcocks		
Clip 14: Nemone		
Clip 15: Lennon Radio 4 clip		
Clip 16: Britney Spears song		

Word sort – Pre-watershed



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Word	Not Gen. accept.	Gen. acceptable
Arse		
Bastard		
Bitch		
Bloody		
Bloodclaat		
Bollocks		
Breasts		
Bugger		
Bum		
Chick-with-dick		
Chink		
Cock		
Crap		
Cripple		
Cunt		
Damn		
Dick		
Dyke		
Faggot		
Fenian		
Fuck		



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Homo	
Hun	
Gash	
Gay	
Gender-bender	
Gippo	
Goddamn	
Jesus Christ	
Lezza & Lesbo	
Looney	
Mental	
Mong	
Mother-fucker	
Nazi	
Nigger	
Nutter	
Paki	
Pikey	
Piss	
Pissed	
Poof	
Pussy	



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Queer	
Retard/retarded	
Schizo	
Shag	
Shit	
Slag	
Spastic/Spakka/Spaz	
Tits	
Towelhead	
Tranny	
Twat	
Wanker	
Yid	

Word sort – Post-watershed

Word	Not Gen. accept.	Gen. acceptable
Arse		
Bastard		
Bitch		
Bloody		
Bloodclaat		
Bollocks		
Breasts		
Bugger		
Bum		
Chick-with-dick		
Chink		
Cock		
Crap		
Cripple		
Cunt		
Damn		
Dick		
Dyke		
Faggot		
Fenian		



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Research reinvented

Fuck	
Homo	
Hun	
Gash	
Gay	
Gender-bender	
Gippo	
Goddamn	
Jesus Christ	
Lezza & Lesbo	
Looney	
Mental	
Mong	
Mother-fucker	
Nazi	
Nigger	
Nutter	
Paki	
Pikey	
Piss	
Pissed	
Poof	



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Research reinvented

Pussy	
Queer	
Retard/retarded	
Schizo	
Shag	
Shit	
Slag	
Spastic/Spakka/Spaz	
Tits	
Towelhead	
Tranny	
Twat	
Wanker	
Yid	

Appendix 12: Discussion guide (general UK sample – in-depth interviews)

Timing	Session
5 mins	<p>Introduction to the research</p> <p>Moderator to introduce themselves and Synovate, MRS code of conduct, confidentiality, audio recording etc</p> <p>Explain the client and purpose of the research:</p> <p><i>Ofcom is the communications regulator for the UK, with responsibility for ensuring that television and radio programmes comply with a set of broadcasting standards, including rules on the use of offensive language. This research is designed to get an understanding of what members of the public feel is acceptable language and what is not acceptable on television and radio, in what context, and the reasons why you feel the way you do. Ofcom will use this research to inform its decisions when it receives complaints about the use of language on television and radio.</i></p> <p><i>This is a potentially sensitive subject and it is important that everyone is honest and openly expresses their views.</i></p> <p><i>We want to understand your own <u>personal</u> views about the issues as an individual, and your views about what is <u>generally</u> acceptable taking into account your views and the views of others. It is important that we are clear about the difference between these two points of view. When you are thinking about what is generally acceptable it is important to know that although everyone has the right to feel personally offended by certain types of language, there is no ban on any term being used, and there can be no ban on offensive material being broadcast. Therefore please bear in mind that when Ofcom consider complaints, they consider that it is acceptable to broadcast language which some people may find offensive as long as it is justified by the context.</i></p> <p>Discuss use of language in the session:</p> <p><i>Given the topic of our discussion, it is likely that I will use some potentially offensive language during the session as I need to make explore your views on the use of specific words and make sure that everyone is clear which words we are talking about. You may also wish to refer to the words directly in the discussion, even if you</i></p>

	<i>find this offensive or would not normally use these or you are welcome to use alternatives, e.g. C-word, F-word, etc.</i>
5 mins	<p>Introductions and warm up</p> <p>Participant to briefing introduce themselves (household/family status, work, hobbies)</p>
1 hour 5 mins	<p>Review of clips – c.5 minutes per clip</p> <p><i>Stimulus material:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Edited versions of clips</i> • <i>Grid to collect acceptability scores</i> <p><i>N.B. See below for rotation instructions on the order in which to show the clips in each group.</i></p> <p><i>Review X Factor and Simpsons clips briefly at the end of the Group 1 clips discussion – ask participants to give acceptability scores out of 10 and a brief reason why.</i></p> <p><i>Throughout, check what responses are based on i.e. when discussing participant's personal point of view, double check that this is their personal perspective, not what they see as generally acceptable, and vice versa.</i></p> <p><i>Ask participant to take comfort breaks as required.</i></p> <p>For each clip, remind participant about time and channel of broadcast and any warning given, then show short clip.</p> <p>Then explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal perspective on the clips • Views on generally accepted standards for each clip <p><i>N.B. Reinforce distinction between personal perspective and generally accepted standards as required</i></p> <p>Explore personal perspective on the clip:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you have watched this programme when it was originally shown? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes, who would you have been watching it with?

- When you watched this clip at home, what did you think of it?
 - If language spontaneously mentioned, probe to understand response e.g. Did you find any of the language offensive? If yes, why? If no, why not?

If language not mentioned spontaneously, explore (see below for probe sheet on specific language to explore in each clip):

- How do **you** feel about the language used in this clip? (Clarify as required: I want to understand your personal point of view at this stage, rather than what you see as generally acceptable)
 - Probe in detail on spontaneous answers to understand what is driving the response
 - Probe specifically on the use of the specific words/phrases in each clip e.g. how do you feel about the use of the word 'fuck/gay/Paki' in this clip?

N.B. All discussion should be in the context of how the language is used in this specific clip. Remind participant about channel and time of broadcast and any warning given where relevant in the discussion.

Explore impact of contextual factors as they arise:

- Programme/programme title
- Genre
- Channel/position on EPG
- Broadcaster/platform (i.e. 5 main terrestrial channels vs Sky vs other commercial broadcasters)
- Time of broadcast (N.B. Need to probe around proximity to watershed, particularly strong/repetitive language used just after 9pm)
- Frequency of language used
- Presence of pre-transmission warning
- If children are watching/likely to be watching

For each contextual factor, explore:

- How does the language used fit with this type of programme/a programme shown on this channel/etc?
- Is it the kind of language you would expect to hear on a programme shown at

this time/a programme of this type/etc?

- If it was a different type of programme/shown at a different time/etc, would it make a difference to your views on the language used?

Additional issues to explore:

- For words with two possible definitions e.g. gay, pikey, retard (which can refer to a minority group or can be used as a general pejorative term, probe on views around how they are being used in this context and whether the way they are used/intended makes a difference to acceptability
- If issues about 'nanny state' or parental responsibility arise spontaneously, probe views further around who is responsible for generally acceptable content and viewing behaviour (e.g. regulators vs broadcasters vs presenters vs technology vs parents)

If any contextual factors do not arise spontaneously, prompt before moving on to discussion about generally accepted standards.

Explore generally accepted standards:

- Thinking about the viewing public as a whole, would you say this language was generally acceptable to use on TV/radio? Why/why not?
- What sorts of people would find this type of language acceptable on TV/radio?
- What sorts of people would find this type of language unacceptable on TV/radio?

N.B. Ensure discussion focuses on use of language on TV/radio, not more generally.

- On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is totally unacceptable and 10 is totally acceptable, how would you rate the use of language in this clip as it was shown, for example at that time, on that channel etc:
 - Thinking about its acceptability on TV or radio from your personal perspective?
 - Thinking about its acceptability on TV or radio for the public generally?

Write on grid provided

Repeat for remaining clips. For all clips, listen out for any points/issues which are different from or did not appear in the previous research and probe in detail. (See

	<p><i>end of guide for list of previous issues/findings.) Focus time on these issues rather than those which have been covered in detail in the previous research.</i></p> <p><i>Review X Factor and Simpsons clips briefly after showing other Group 1 clips – ask participants to give acceptability scores out of 10 and a brief reason why.</i></p>
<p>9.05pm 15 minutes</p>	<p>Word sort exercise</p> <p>Stimulus materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping cards with offensive words • Grid to collect offensive word response <p><i>During this exercise we will give the respondent mapping cards, each containing the list of 50 offensive words Ofcom wishes to explore. (All words should be used in this exercise).</i></p> <p><i>Thinking about what would be generally acceptable in terms of offensive language, before and after 9pm (the watershed), respondents will be asked to group the words:</i></p> <p><i>First - thinking about before 9pm (pre-watershed context)– respondents will be asked to arrange the words along a scale where one end is ‘not generally acceptable’ and the other end is ‘generally acceptable’.</i></p> <p><i>N.B. Ask participant to stand up and physically sort the cards (e.g.use floor/table)</i></p> <p><i>Moderator will probe the reasons behind their choices in detail. He/she will ask:</i></p> <p>For each grouping of words that occurs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probe on what makes one word or grouping of words more/less acceptable than another e.g. why is ‘shit’ generally more acceptable than ‘fuck’. <p>Note: Probe specifically on the words in bold</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>When do you feel it is acceptable for these words to be used? Programme/programme title, genre, channel/position on EPG, broadcaster/platform (i.e. 5 main terrestrial channels vs Sky vs other commercial broadcasters), time of broadcast (esp. proximity to watershed, frequency of language used, presence of pre-transmission warning, if children are watching/likely to be watching</i> • When would it be unacceptable? Why

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who would it be unacceptable to? Why (10 mins) <p><i>Moderator must take snapshot of word sort; then ask participant to review the words that are on the 'not generally acceptable' side of the scale pre-watershed in a post-watershed context i.e. where would they be positioned on the scale if used after 9pm.</i></p> <p>(5 mins)</p>
	<p>Summary, thanks and close</p>

Rotation order

ALL DEPTHS START WITH GROUP 1 CLIPS

Depth/location	Order for groups of clips	Order for Themes	Order for clips within themes
<i>Depth 1, No children, aged 18-30, Male ABC1, Afro-Caribbean, Belfast</i>	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme C Group 2: Start at Theme G	Start on first clip in each theme
<i>Depth 2, No children, aged 18-30, C2DE, White UK, Glasgow</i>	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme D Group 2: Start at Theme H	Start on second clip in each theme
<i>Depth 3, Younger children, aged 20-45, C2DE, White UK, Glasgow</i>	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme A Group 2: Start at Theme E	Start on first clip in each theme
<i>Depth 4, Younger children, aged 20-45 ABC1, Asian, Birmingham</i>	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme B Group 2: Start at Theme F	Start on second clip in each theme
<i>Depth 5, No children, aged 30-55, ABC1, White UK, Cardiff</i>	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme C Group 2: Start at Theme G	Start on first clip in each theme
<i>Depth 6, No children, aged 30-55, C2DE, Asian, Slough</i>	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme D Group 2: Start at Theme H	Start on second clip in each theme

<i>Depth 7, Older children, aged 30-55, C2DE, Afro-Caribbean, London</i>	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme A Group 2: Start at Theme E	Start on first clip in each theme
<i>Depth 8, Older children, aged 30-55, ABC1, White UK, Belfast</i>	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme B Group 2: Start at Theme F	Start on second clip in each theme
<i>Depth 9, No children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, ABC1, Asian, Birmingham</i>	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme C Group 2: Start at Theme G	Start on first clip in each theme
<i>Depth 10, No children/empty nesters, aged 55-75, C2DE, Afro-Caribbean, Cardiff</i>	Start with Group 1	Group 1: Start at Theme D Group 2: Start at Theme H	Start on second clip in each theme

All other sections as per the groups discussion guide in the previous appendix.

Appendix 13: Discussion guide (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, traveller and disability audiences)

N.B. A slightly amended version of the discussion guide was used for the depth with a person with a learning disability. This version is included in the next appendix.

Timing	Session
5 mins	<p>Introduction to the research</p> <p>Moderator to introduce themselves and Synovate, MRS code of conduct, confidentiality, audio recording etc</p> <p>Explain the client and purpose of the research:</p> <p><i>Ofcom is the communications regulator for the UK, with responsibility for ensuring that television and radio programmes comply with a set of broadcasting standards, including rules on the use of offensive language. This research is designed to get an understanding of what members of the public feel is acceptable language and what is not acceptable on television and radio, in what context, and the reasons why you feel the way you do. Ofcom will use this research to inform its decisions when it receives complaints about the use of language on television and radio.</i></p> <p><i>Ofcom want to hear the views of a wide range of people within this research. We are interested in your views as individuals and also as [AS APPROPRIATE] travellers/gay and bisexual men/lesbian and bisexual women/transgender women/a transgender man/a disabled person/the family member of a disabled person.</i></p> <p><i>This subject and the clips we've asked you to watch can provoke a range of reactions: some people may find the material personally offensive or have strong feelings, whereas other people may not. Ofcom really wants to hear your views,. But if you are uncomfortable discussing any of the clips, please let me know. We can stop the discussion at any point or [FOR GROUPS] you can step out of the group for any of the clips you don't feel comfortable talking about.</i></p> <p><i>We want to understand your own <u>personal</u> views about the issues as an individual, and your views about what is <u>generally</u> acceptable taking into account your views and the views of others. It is important that we are clear about the difference between these</i></p>

	<p><i>two points of view. When you are thinking about what is generally acceptable it is important to know that although everyone has the right to feel personally offended by certain types of language, there is no ban on any term being used, and there can be no ban on offensive material being broadcast. Therefore please bear in mind that when Ofcom consider complaints, they consider that it is acceptable to broadcast language which some people may find offensive as long as it is justified by the context.</i></p> <p>Discuss use of language in the session:</p> <p><i>Given the topic of tonight's discussion, it is likely that I will use some potentially offensive language during the session as I need to make explore your views on the use of specific words and make sure that everyone is clear which words we are talking about. You may also wish to refer to the words directly in the discussion, even if you find this offensive or would not normally use these or you are welcome to use alternatives, e.g. C-word, F-word, etc.</i></p>
<p>Groups: 10 minutes</p> <p>Depths: 5 minutes</p>	<p>Introductions and warm up</p> <p>GROUPS: Paired introductions – group split into pairs and given two minutes to talk to partner before introducing them back to the group</p> <p>DEPTHS: Ask participant to introduce themselves (family, work, hobbies, etc as appropriate)</p>
<p>Groups: 1 hour 25 mins</p> <p>Depths: 1 hour 5 mins</p>	<p>Review of clips – c.10 minutes per clip</p> <p><i>Stimulus material:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Edited versions of clips</i> • <i>Grid to collect acceptability scores</i> <p><i>N.B. See below for rotation instructions on the order in which to show the clips in each group. As time does not allow for all the pretask clips to be discussed, please encourage participants to refer to clips which they have watched as part of the pretask where relevant.</i></p> <p><i>Please divide up the time in the following way:</i></p> <p>GROUPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>First 3 clips – 5-6 minutes on each</i> • <i>Clips relating to the specific minority group – c.15 minutes on each and c.10 mins</i>

additional discussion

- *Remaining discriminatory language clips – c.5-6 minutes on each*

DEPTHS

- *First 3 clips – 3-4 minutes on each*
- *Clips relating to the specific minority group – c. 10 minutes on each and c. 10 mins additional discussion*
- *Remaining discriminatory language clips – c.3-4 minutes on each*

Throughout, check what responses are based on i.e. when discussing participants' personal point of view, double check that this is their personal perspective, not what they see as generally acceptable, and vice versa.

Ask participants to take comfort breaks as required.

For each clip, remind participants about time and channel of broadcast and any warning given, then show short clip.

Then explore:

- Personal perspective on the clips
- Views on generally accepted standards for each clip

N.B. Reinforce distinction between personal perspective and generally accepted standards as required

Explore personal perspective on the clip:

- Would you have watched this programme when it was originally shown?
 - If yes, who would you have been watching it with?
- When you watched this clip at home, what did you think of it?
 - If language spontaneously mentioned, probe to understand response e.g. Did you find any of the language offensive? If yes, why? If no, why not?

If language not mentioned spontaneously, explore (see below for probe sheet on specific language to explore in each clip):

- How do **you** feel about the language used in this clip? (Clarify as required: I want to understand your personal point of view at this stage, rather than what you see as

generally acceptable)

- Probe in detail on spontaneous answers to understand what is driving the response
- Probe specifically on the use of the specific words/phrases in each clip e.g. how do you feel about the use of the word 'fuck/gay/Paki' in this clip?

N.B. All discussion should be in the context of how the language is used in this specific clip. Remind participants about channel and time of broadcast and any warning given where relevant in the discussion.

Explore impact of contextual factors as they arise:

- Programme/programme title
- Genre
- Channel/position on EPG
- Broadcaster/platform (i.e. 5 main terrestrial channels vs Sky vs other commercial broadcasters)
- Time of broadcast (N.B. Need to probe around proximity to watershed, particularly strong/repetitive language used just after 9pm)
- Frequency of language used
- Presence of pre-transmission warning
- If children are watching/likely to be watching

For each contextual factor, explore:

- How does the language used fit with this type of programme/a programme shown on this channel/etc?
- Is it the kind of language you would expect to hear on a programme shown at this time/a programme of this type/etc?
- If it was a different type of programme/shown at a different time/etc, would it make a difference to your views on the language used?

Additional issues to explore:

- For words with two possible definitions e.g. gay, pikey, retard (which can refer to a minority group or can be used as a general pejorative term, probe on views around how they are being used in this context and whether the way they are

used/intended makes a difference to acceptability

- If issues about 'nanny state' or parental responsibility arise spontaneously, probe views further around who is responsible for generally acceptable content and viewing behaviour (e.g. regulators vs broadcasters vs presenters vs technology vs parents)

If any contextual factors do not arise spontaneously, prompt before moving on to discussion about generally accepted standards.

Explore generally accepted standards:

- Thinking about the viewing public as a whole, would you say this language was generally acceptable to use on TV/radio? Why/why not?
- What sorts of people would find this type of language acceptable on TV/radio?
- What sorts of people would find this type of language unacceptable on TV/radio?

N.B. Ensure discussion focuses on use of language on TV/radio, not more generally.

- On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is totally unacceptable and 10 is totally acceptable, how would you rate the use of language in this clip as it was shown, for example at that time, on that channel etc:
 - Thinking about its acceptability on TV or radio from your personal perspective?
 - Thinking about its acceptability on TV or radio for the public generally?
- Write on grid provided then share with group

Repeat for remaining clips. For all clips, listen out for any points/issues which are different from or did not appear in the previous research and probe in detail. (See end of guide for list of previous issues/findings.) Focus time on these issues rather than those which have been covered in detail in the previous research.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES TO EXPLORE DURING DISCUSSION OF DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE CLIPS RELATING TO THE SPECIFIC MINORITY GROUP TAKING PART (c.10 mins)

- How do your views on these clips compare with the way you feel about some of the other clips? [MODERATOR TO GIVE EXAMPLES OF OTHER DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE CLIPS VIEWED]

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probe in detail to understand why views are similar or different ● How do your views on these clips compare with the way you feel about some of the other clips which have included swear words? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probe in detail to understand why views are similar or different ● Have you ever been offended by anything you have seen on TV or heard on radio which uses these words/this kind of language? [MODERATOR TO GIVE EXAMPLES OF THE SPECIFIC WORDS RELATING TO THE RELEVANT MINORITY GROUP] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ IF THEY HAVE BEEN OFFENDED BY OTHER CLIPS: How did those clips compare to the ones you have looked at for this research?
<p>Groups: 20 mins</p> <p>Depths: 15 mins</p>	<p>Word sort exercise</p> <p>Stimulus materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mapping cards with offensive words ● Grid to collect offensive word response <p><i>During this exercise we will give the respondents mapping cards, each containing the list of c.40 offensive words Ofcom wishes to explore. (This exercise will include all discriminatory words and 8-10 other strong language words for context.)</i></p> <p><i>As a group, thinking about what would be generally acceptable in terms of offensive language, before and after 9pm (the watershed), respondents will be asked to group the words:</i></p> <p><i>First - thinking about before 9pm (pre-watershed context)– respondents will be asked to arrange the words along a scale where one end is ‘not generally acceptable’ and the other end is ‘generally acceptable’.</i></p> <p><i>N.B. Ask group to stand up and physically sort the cards (stick on wall if flipcharts/space available or use floor/table)</i></p> <p><i>Moderator will listen to their discussion and then probe the reasons behind their choices in detail. He/she will ask:</i></p> <p>For each grouping of words that occurs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Probe on what makes one word or grouping of words more/less acceptable than another e.g. why is ‘shit’ generally more acceptable than ‘fuck’.

	<p>Note: Probe specifically on the words in bold</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>When do you feel it is acceptable for these words to be used? Programme/programme title, genre, channel/position on EPG, broadcaster/platform (i.e. 5 main terrestrial channels vs Sky vs other commercial broadcasters), time of broadcast (esp. proximity to watershed, frequency of language used, presence of pre-transmission warning, if children are watching/likely to be watching</i> • When would it be unacceptable? Why • Who would it be unacceptable to? Why <p>(15 mins)</p> <p>Moderator must take snapshot of word sort; then ask participants to review the words that are on the 'not generally acceptable' side of the scale pre-watershed in a post-watershed context i.e. where would they be positioned on the scale if used after 9pm. (5 mins)</p>
	<p>Summary, thanks and close</p> <p>Before ending the group, thank participants for their input on a difficult subject and check if there is anything that has upset individual participants. If so, offer to discuss immediately or provide telephone number for the participant to use if they wish to discuss at a later time.</p>

Grouping of clips into themes:

Group 1: Strong language	
Theme A: Family viewing	Clip 5: Coronation Street
Theme D: Post-watershed strong language	Clip 8: Ramsey's Great British Nightmare Clip 9: Free Agents
Group 2: Discriminatory language	
Theme E: Discriminatory language – racism	Clip 1: Hollyoaks Clip 7: Big Brother
Theme F: Discriminatory language – travellers	Clip 2: F1 Canadian Grand Prix Clip 3: Top Gear
Theme G1: Discriminatory language – sexuality	Clip 4: Top Gear Clip 6: My Wife and Kids
Theme H: Discriminatory language – disability	Clip 11: Never Mind The Buzzcocks Clip 12: The Inbetweeners Clip 14: Nemone
Theme G2: Discriminatory language – sexual identity	Clip 10: Moving Wallpaper Clip 13: Most Annoying People of the Year

Rotation order

Group/location	Order for clips
Group 1: Gay and bisexual men Group 2: Lesbian and bisexual women	<p>Group 1 clips: Clip 5, Clip 8</p> <p>Group 2 clips:</p> Travellers: Clip 3 Sexuality: Clip 4, Clip 6 Sexual identity: Clip 10 Racism: Clip 1 Disability: Clip 14
Group 3: Male to female transgender women Depth 1: Female to male transgender man	<p>Group 1 clips: Clip 5, Clip 8</p> <p>Group 2 clips:</p> Disability: Clip 14 Sexual identity: Clip 10, Clip 13 Sexuality: Clip 4 Travellers: Clip 3 Racism: Clip 1
Group 4: Male travellers Group 5: Female travellers	<p>Group 1 clips: Clip 5, Clip 8</p> <p>Group 2 clips:</p> Racism: Clip 1 Travellers: Clip 2, Clip 3 Disability: Clip 14 Sexual identity: Clip 10 Sexuality: Clip 4

Depths 2-7: Disabled people and family members of disabled people

Group 1 clips: Clip 5, Clip 8

Group 2 clips:

Sexual identity: Clip 10

Disability: Clip 11, Clip 12, Clip 14

Racism: Clip 1

Sexuality: Clip 4

Travellers: Clip 3

Probe sheet for moderator on specific language to explore for each clip (not for circulation)

Pre-watershed	Programme details	Specific language to explore
<p>Clip 1 Hollyoaks, Channel 4, Monday at 18:30</p>	<p>Hollyoaks is a soap set around a fictional Chester suburb, aimed at a teen and young adult audience. The characters are generally in their late teens or early twenties and the storylines often tackle difficult issues, for example drug addiction, homelessness, racism, homosexuality, and rape. Two of the characters are Gez who is a known and disliked bully, and Anita who is struggling with her sense of identity.</p> <p>There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown: "...in Hollyoaks first, Gez continues to bully Anita".</p>	<p>Paki</p>
<p>Clip 2 F1: Canadian Grand Prix Live, ITV1, Sunday at 17:05</p>	<p>This is live sports coverage of commentator Martin Brundle's grid walk, which takes place before the start of each Grand Prix. During the grid walk Martin tries to get last minute interviews with drivers and other personalities in Formula One.</p>	<p>Pikey</p>
<p>Clip 3 Top Gear, BBC 2, Sunday at 20:00</p>	<p>Top Gear is a long running entertainment series about cars. This is often light hearted and contains banter between the three presenters. This tends to appeal to men, but also some children.</p>	<p>Three references to pikey:</p> <p>Pie and key on car bonnet</p> <p>Steak and kidney lock opener</p> <p>Anyone whose business is selling pegs and heather</p>
<p>Clip 4 Top Gear, BBC 2, Sunday at 20:00</p>	<p>Top Gear is a long running entertainment series about cars. This is often light hearted and contains banter between the three presenters. This tends to appeal to men, but also some children.</p>	<p>Gay</p> <p>Ginger beer (queer)</p>



synovate

Research reinvented

<p>Clip 5 Coronation Street, ITV1, Sunday at 19.30</p>	<p>Coronation Street is a long running British soap set in Manchester, and is watched by a broad range of people. This particular clip features a heated argument between some of the well known female characters who live on the street.</p>	<p>Dirty/cheeky little bitch Stupid/cheeky cow Slut</p>
<p>Clip 6: My Wife and Kids, Virgin 1, Tuesday at 5.30pm</p>	<p>My Wife and Kids is an American sitcom about a husband and modern-day head of the family who rules his household with a distinct parenting style. He teaches his three children some of life's lessons with his own brand of humour, wisdom, and discipline.</p>	<p>Gay</p>
<p>Post-watershed</p>	<p>Programme details</p>	<p>Specific language to explore</p>
<p>Clip 7 Big Brother, series 8, Channel 4, Wednesday at 22:00</p>	<p>Big Brother is a reality programme. "Housemates" live together in a specially designed house where they are recorded by cameras and microphones at all times and they are not allowed any contact with the outside world. The housemates try to win a cash prize by avoiding evictions from the house.</p>	<p>Nigger</p>
<p>Clip 8 Ramsay's Great British Nightmare, Channel 4, Friday between 21:00 and 23:00</p>	<p>Ramsay's Great British Nightmare is a reality series which shows well known TV chef Gordon Ramsay helping some of Britain's struggling restaurants.</p> <p>There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown: "strong language from the start and throughout".</p>	<p>Fuck and its derivatives</p>
<p>Clip 9 Free Agents, Channel 4, Friday at 22:00</p>	<p>Free Agents is a sitcom set in a glamorous talent agency about an on-off romance between two people. The programme was shown at a time that is normally used for comedy on this channel.</p> <p>There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown: was "a new comedy...with very strong language and adult humour and content from the start and throughout..."</p>	<p>Fuck Cunt</p>

<p>Clip 10 Moving Wallpaper, ITV1, Friday at 21:00</p>	<p>Moving Wallpaper is a comedy drama set in a television production office run by an egotistical television producer. This episode was part of the second series and shows the producer working under pressure to make a hit programme after the failure of his last show.</p> <p>There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown: "...which has strong language".</p>	<p>Cock in a frock Tranny</p>
<p>Clip 11 Never Mind the Buzzcocks, BBC2, Thursday at 21:30</p>	<p>Never Mind the Buzzcocks is a comedy pop quiz, with guest competitors from music, TV and comedy.</p> <p>There was a voice over giving the following information before this was shown "...and with some strong language, who's calling the tune this week?"</p>	<p>Retarded</p>
<p>Clip 12 The Inbetweeners E4, Thursday at 10.35pm</p>	<p>The Inbetweeners is a comedy about a group of boys struggling through sixth form. It is aimed at older teens and young adults. This episode was originally broadcast on E4 at 22:35 and repeated on Channel 4 at 22:50.</p>	<p>'Down's Syndrome' used to describe a character who is stupid Gash</p>
<p>Clip 13 Most Annoying People of the Year BBC Three, Saturday at 9.35pm</p>	<p>Most Annoying People of the year is a review of people and events that made the headlines during 2008. It was presented in the format of a "chart" countdown and featured contributors from the world of comedy and entertainment talking about who and what really annoyed them during 2008.</p>	<p>Chicks with dicks Trannies</p>
<p>Radio</p>	<p>Programme details</p>	<p>Specific language to explore</p>
<p>Clip 14 Nemone, BBC 6 Music, Friday at 13:00</p>	<p>This is a daily magazine programme hosted by the DJ Nemone Metaxas. The station is aimed at 25 to 44-year-olds. The main focus of this programme is music, but sometimes this has other guests from the world of entertainment. This programme had an interview with American stand-up comedian Doug Stanhope.</p>	<p>Retard (to describe a child with Down's Syndrome)</p>

Key findings from previous research (for moderator use only)

Ofcom 2005 research on offensive language on TV and radio

The main issues raised in previous research which affect the level of offence were:

- The manner in which words are used
 - Expected or unexpected
 - Single or repeated use
 - Part of the storyline or not
 - Relevant to the character or not
 - Relevant to the genre/programme format or not
 - Used by and within a peer group vs used by someone not in the group affected by the word
 - Used to insult/aggressively,

- The listening context
 - Time of broadcast
 - Channel of broadcast
 - Profile of audience, particularly whether children are likely to be watching/listening or if it is family viewing
 - Whether there is a warning (for planned use) or an apology (for mistaken/unexpected use)

- The words/phrases used

Seen as offensive across audience groups	Jesus Fucking Christ, Jesus Shitting Christ, cunt, spastic, cocksucker, motherfucker, fuck/fucking
Offensive to some groups/polarising	Arsehole, cock, pussy, twat, mong, retard, schizo, queer, faggot, dyke, bastard, bitch, dickhead, prickteaser, slag, slut, wanker, whore, bonk, poke, shag
In general not	Bloody, God, Jesus, arse, balls, bollocks, bum, crap, dick, fart, knob, prick, shit, tits, nutter, poof, git, piss off, pissed, sod,

offensive/mild	bugger, screw
Unknown to most but not offensive to those who know them	Batty boy, bumbu, hoochie
Unknown to most but offensive to those who know them	Blaad claat, chi-chi man, ho, punani

BBC Research 2009: Taste, Standards and the BBC

This research highlights the importance of contextual factors in determining response to strong language and swearing on TV, Key factors are:

- Is it editorially necessary
- Is it part of a genuine emotional outburst and so authentic
- Was it scripted or live
- Who is uttering it and in what tone (more unsettling for some when used in anger or aggression)
- Whether it is excessive or unnecessary

Overall concern about swearing and strong language on the radio is at a relatively low level because the medium is more one-on-one. If strong language is used mistakenly during a live programme and there is an immediate apology, there seems to be a degree of forgiveness. Scripted programmes are more problematic, but can be justified depending on content, warnings etc.

Form for rating each clip

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is totally unacceptable and 10 is totally acceptable, how would you rate the use of language in this clip as it was shown:

Clip	Thinking about its acceptability on TV or radio from your personal perspective?	Thinking about its acceptability on TV or radio for the public generally?
Clip 1: Hollyoaks		
Clip 2: F1 Canadian Grand Prix		
Clip 3: Top Gear		
Clip 4: Top Gear		
Clip 5: Coronation Street		
Clip 6: My Wife and Kids		
Clip 7: Big Brother		
Clip 8: Ramsey's Great British Nightmare		
Clip 9: Free Agents		
Clip 10: Moving Wallpaper		
Clip 11: Never Mind The Buzzcocks		
Clip 12: The Inbetweeners		
Clip 13: Most Annoying People of the Year		
Clip 14: Nemone		

Word sort – Pre-watershed

Word	Not Gen. accept.	Gen. acceptable
Bastard		
Bitch		
Bloody		
Bollocks		
Chick-with-dick		
Chink		
Cock		
Cripple		
Cunt		
Dyke		
Faggot		
Fenian		
Fuck		
Homo		
Hun		
Gay		
Gender-bender		
Gippo		
Goddamn		
Jesus Christ		



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Research reinvented

Lezza & Lesbo	
Looney	
Mental	
Mong	
Nazi	
Nigger	
Nutter	
Paki	
Pikey	
Piss	
Poof	
Queer	
Retard/retarded	
Schizo	
Shit	
Spastic/Spakka/Spaz	
Tits	
Towelhead	
Tranny	
Twat	
Wanker	
Yid	

Word sort – Post-watershed

Word	Not Gen. accept.	Gen. acceptable
Bastard		
Bitch		
Bloody		
Bollocks		
Chick-with-dick		
Chink		
Cock		
Cripple		
Cunt		
Dyke		
Faggot		
Fenian		
Fuck		
Homo		
Hun		
Gay		
Gender-bender		
Gippo		
Goddamn		
Jesus Christ		



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Retard/retarded	
Schizo	
Shit	
Spastic/Spakka/Spaz	
Tits	
Towelhead	
Tranny	
Twat	
Wanker	
Yid	

Appendix 14: Discussion guide (person with a learning disability)

Timing	Session
5 mins	<p>Introduction to the research</p> <p>Moderator to introduce themselves and Synovate, MRS code of conduct, confidentiality, audio recording etc</p> <p>Explain the client and purpose of the research:</p> <p><i>We are doing some research on behalf of Ofcom, the communications regulator. Part of their job is making sure that television and radio programmes follow rules on the use of offensive language. We want to hear about your views on what language is acceptable on television and radio and what is not, and the reasons why you feel the way you do. Ofcom will use this research to help with decisions when it gets complaints about language on television and radio.</i></p> <p><i>Ofcom want to hear from a wide range of people. I would like to know what you think personally and also as someone who has a learning disability.</i></p> <p><i>Today, we are going to talk about some of the clips you have wanted. Some people find those clips offensive but some people do not. Ofcom really want to hear your views. But if you do not want to discuss any of the clips, please let me know. We can also stop our conversation at any point you want.</i></p> <p>Discuss use of language in the session:</p> <p><i>When we are talking about the clips, I need to understand how you feel about some words in particular. So, I will use some words which people may find offensive during our conversation. It is fine for you to use these words too if you want to. If not you can say 'C-word' or 'F-word' instead.</i></p>
Depths: 5 minutes	<p>Introductions and warm up</p> <p>DEPTHs: Ask participant to introduce themselves (family, work, hobbies, etc as appropriate)</p>

<p>Depths: 1 hour 5 mins</p>	<p>Review of clips – c.10 minutes per clip</p> <p><i>Stimulus material:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Edited versions of clips</i> • <i>Grid to collect acceptability scores</i> <p><i>N.B. See below for rotation instructions on the order in which to show the clips in each group. As time does not allow for all the pretask clips to be discussed, please encourage participants to refer to clips which they have watched as part of the pretask where relevant.</i></p> <p><i>If possible, please divide up the time in the following way:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>First 3 clips – 3-4 minutes on each</i> • <i>Clips relating to the specific minority group – c. 10 minutes on each and c. 10 mins additional discussion</i> • <i>Remaining discriminatory language clips – c.3-4 minutes on each</i> <p><i>Check at this stage if there are any clips that the respondent does not wish to discuss</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>If the respondent does not wish to discuss Clip 5 (Coronation Street) or Clip 8 (Ramsey’s Great British Nightmare), check if they are happy to discuss Clip 9 and if so, cover this instead of the clip/s they do not wish to discuss</i> - <i>If the respondent does not wish to discuss any of the discriminatory language clips relating to disability, replace with another discriminatory language clip</i> - <i>If the respondent does not wish to discuss any of the other discriminatory language clips suggested in the rotation, replace with others that they are happy to discuss from within the same theme</i> <p><i>Assess pace on discussion of first clip. If suggested pace is not appropriate for the respondent, prioritise the discriminatory language clips relating to people with disabilities.</i></p> <p><i>Throughout, check what responses are based on i.e. when discussing participants’ personal point of view, double check that this is their personal perspective, not what they see as generally acceptable, and vice versa.</i></p> <p><i>Ask participants to take comfort breaks as required.</i></p> <p>For each clip, remind participants about time and channel of broadcast and any</p>
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warning given, then show short clip.

Then explore:

- Personal perspective on the clips
- Views on generally accepted standards for each clip

N.B. Reinforce distinction between personal perspective and generally accepted standards as required

Explore personal perspective on the clip:

- Would you have watched this programme when it was originally shown?
 - If yes, who would you have been watching it with?
- When you watched this clip at home, what did you think of it?
 - If language spontaneously mentioned, probe to understand response e.g. Did you find any of the language offensive? If yes, why? If no, why not?

If language not mentioned spontaneously, explore (see below for probe sheet on specific language to explore in each clip):

- How do **you** feel about the language used in this clip? (Clarify as required: I want to understand your personal point of view at this stage, rather than what you see as generally acceptable)
 - Probe in detail on spontaneous answers to understand what is driving the response
 - Probe specifically on the use of the specific words/phrases in each clip e.g. how do you feel about the use of the word 'fuck/gay/Paki' in this clip?

N.B. All discussion should be in the context of how the language is used in this specific clip. Remind participants about channel and time of broadcast and any warning given where relevant in the discussion.

Explore impact of contextual factors as they arise:

- Programme/programme title
- Genre
- Channel/position on EPG
- Broadcaster/platform (i.e. 5 main terrestrial channels vs Sky vs other commercial

broadcasters)

- Time of broadcast (N.B. Need to probe around proximity to watershed, particularly strong/repetitive language used just after 9pm)
- Frequency of language used
- Presence of pre-transmission warning
- If children are watching/likely to be watching

For each contextual factor, explore:

- How does the language used fit with this type of programme/a programme shown on this channel/etc?
- Is it the kind of language you would expect to hear on a programme shown at this time/a programme of this type/etc?
- If it was a different type of programme/shown at a different time/etc, would it make a difference to your views on the language used?

Additional issues to explore:

- For words with two possible definitions e.g. gay, pikey, retard (which can refer to a minority group or can be used as a general pejorative term, probe on views around how they are being used in this context and whether the way they are used/intended makes a difference to acceptability)
- If issues about 'nanny state' or parental responsibility arise spontaneously, probe views further around who is responsible for generally acceptable content and viewing behaviour (e.g. regulators vs broadcasters vs presenters vs technology vs parents)

If any contextual factors do not arise spontaneously, prompt before moving on to discussion about generally accepted standards.

Explore generally accepted standards:

- Thinking about the viewing public as a whole, would you say this language was generally acceptable to use on TV/radio? Why/why not?
- What sorts of people would find this type of language acceptable on TV/radio?
- What sorts of people would find this type of language unacceptable on TV/radio?

N.B. Ensure discussion focuses on use of language on TV/radio, not more generally.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is totally unacceptable and 10 is totally acceptable, how would you rate the use of language in this clip as it was shown, for example at that time, on that channel etc: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Thinking about its acceptability on TV or radio from your personal perspective? ○ Thinking about its acceptability on TV or radio for the public generally? ● Write on grid provided then share with group <p><i>Repeat for remaining clips. For all clips, listen out for any points/issues which are different from or did not appear in the previous research and probe in detail. (See end of guide for list of previous issues/findings.) Focus time on these issues rather than those which have been covered in detail in the previous research.</i></p> <p>ADDITIONAL ISSUES TO EXPLORE DURING DISCUSSION OF DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE CLIPS RELATING TO THE SPECIFIC MINORITY GROUP TAKING PART (c.10 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do your views on these clips compare with the way you feel about some of the other clips? [MODERATOR TO GIVE EXAMPLES OF OTHER DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE CLIPS VIEWED] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probe in detail to understand why views are similar or different ● How do your views on these clips compare with the way you feel about some of the other clips which have included swear words? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probe in detail to understand why views are similar or different ● Have you ever been offended by anything you have seen on TV or heard on radio which uses these words/this kind of language? [MODERATOR TO GIVE EXAMPLES OF THE SPECIFIC WORDS RELATING TO THE RELEVANT MINORITY GROUP] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ IF THEY HAVE BEEN OFFENDED BY OTHER CLIPS: How did those clips compare to the ones you have looked at for this research?
<p>Depths: 15 mins</p>	<p>Word sort exercise</p> <p>Stimulus materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mapping cards with offensive words

- Grid to collect offensive word response

During this exercise we will give the respondents mapping cards, each containing the list of c.40 offensive words Ofcom wishes to explore. (This exercise will include all discriminatory words and 8-10 other strong language words for context.)

As a group, thinking about what would be generally acceptable in terms of offensive language, before and after 9pm (the watershed), respondents will be asked to group the words:

First - thinking about before 9pm (pre-watershed context)– respondents will be asked to arrange the words along a scale where one end is 'not generally acceptable' and the other end is 'generally acceptable'.

N.B. Ask group to stand up and physically sort the cards (stick on wall if flipcharts/space available or use floor/table)

Moderator will listen to their discussion and then probe the reasons behind their choices in detail. He/she will ask:

For each grouping of words that occurs:

- Probe on what makes one word or grouping of words more/less acceptable than another e.g. why is 'shit' generally more acceptable than 'fuck'.

Note: Probe specifically on the words in bold

- *When do you feel it is acceptable for these words to be used?
Programme/programme title, genre, channel/position on EPG, broadcaster/platform (i.e. 5 main terrestrial channels vs Sky vs other commercial broadcasters), time of broadcast (esp. proximity to watershed, frequency of language used, presence of pre-transmission warning, if children are watching/likely to be watching)*
- When would it be unacceptable? Why
- Who would it be unacceptable to? Why

(15 mins)

Moderator must take snapshot of word sort; then ask participants to review the words that are on the 'not generally acceptable' side of the scale pre-watershed in a post-watershed context i.e. where would they be positioned on the scale if used after 9pm. (5 mins)

	<p>Summary, thanks and close</p>
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	<p>Before ending the group, thank participants for their input on a difficult subject and check if there is anything that has upset individual participants. If so, offer to discuss immediately or provide telephone number for the participant to use if they wish to discuss at a later time.</p>
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All other sections as per the discussion guide in the previous appendix.

Appendix 15: List of words used in word sort exercise (general UK sample)

Racial/ Religious/ Political	Paki Nigger Pikey Nazi Jesus Christ Towelhead Gippo Yid Chink Fenian Hun Goddamn
Sexual orientation/ Gender identity	Tranny Gay Queer Poof Dyke Faggot Lezza & Lesbo Chick-with-dick Homo Gender-bender
Mental/physical condition	Retard/retarded Spastic/Spakka/Spaz Mong Schizo Nutter



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Research reinvented

	Cripple Looney Mental
General	Fuck Mother-fucker Slag Bitch Shit Piss Pissed Bloody Crap Bastard Damn Shag Wanker Bugger
Body parts	Cunt Twat Pussy Cock Gash Bollocks Bloodclaat Bum Dick Tits Breasts Arse

Appendix 16: List of words used in word sort exercise (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, traveller and disability audiences)

Racial/ Religious/ Political	Paki Nigger Pikey Nazi Jesus Christ Towelhead Gippo Yid Chink Fenian Hun Goddamn
Sexual orientation/ Gender identity	Tranny Gay Queer Poof Dyke Faggot Lezza & Lesbo Chick-with-dick Homo Gender-bender
Mental/physical condition	Retard/retarded Spastic/Spakka/Spaz Mong



synovate

Research reinvented

	Schizo Nutter Cripple Looney Mental
General	Fuck Bitch Shit Piss Bloody Bastard Wanker
Body parts	Cunt Twat Cock Bollocks Tits