Consultation with Young People on the Proposed Ofcom Broadcasting Code

A research consultation with under 18s

Research study carried out by The Dream Mill
on behalf of Ofcom

Date issued: September 2005

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Section 1

Background

As the regulator for the UK communications industries, with responsibilities for television, radio, telecommunications and wireless communications services, Ofcom replaces the Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC), the Independent Television Commission (ITC) and the Radio Authority (RA).

Section 319 (1) of the Communications Act 2003 ("The Act") requires Ofcom to set a Code which contains standards for the content of television and radio services. The Ofcom Broadcasting Code, took effect on 25 July 2005[1]. The Code, with certain exceptions in the case of the BBC (Sections Five, Six, Nine and Ten) and S4C (part of Section Six), applies to all broadcasters regulated by Ofcom.

The new Code replaces the BSC Code on Fairness and Privacy; the BSC Code on Standards; the ITC Programme Code; the ITC Code of Programme Sponsorship; the RA News and Current Affairs Code and Programme Code; and the sponsorship rules contained in the RA Advertising and Sponsorship Code. The Code applies to all television programmes, radio programming and sponsorship on broadcast services regulated by Ofcom.

The Act requires that those under eighteen should be protected, and Section One of the Broadcasting Code concerns the protection of the under-eighteens. Other rules in other sections of the Code also are pertinent to the under-eighteens.

Given that it is unlikely that under-eighteens will respond to a public consultation, this research was undertaken to aid Ofcom in accessing the attitudes of those under eighteen. The research aimed to provide a consultation process in which young people could express their views about the draft Code issues that were relevant to them. Given that many of the Broadcasting Code rules were devised with the aim of protecting young people under the age of eighteen years, it was felt to be important to engage with them directly through research about the meaning and implications of Code rules for their age group.

The Broadcasting Code aims to set standards that will protect viewers and listeners while enabling broadcasters to be creative and to express a full range of views. The principle expressed in Section One of the published Code now requires that people under eighteen are protected. The principles contained in the draft Code (the subject of this research) were to ensure that people under the age of eighteen are protected from:

- potential or actual moral, psychological or physical harm caused by content in programmes;
- potential or actual distress caused by content in programmes;
- potential or actual exploitation through participation or coverage in programmes;
- potential or actual harm through participation or coverage in programmes;
- material which might seriously impair the moral, psychological or physical development of minors.

The aim of the Code is to ensure that material that is unsuitable for people under the

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[1] with the exception of rule 10.17 which took effect on 1 July 2005

age of eighteen is scheduled appropriately. There is a requirement for television broadcasters to observe the 'watershed' which starts at 2100 and lasts until 0530 (except for premium subscription film services which observe an 2000 watershed), and for radio broadcasters to have particular regard to times when children are particularly likely to be listening. In scheduling content, broadcasters must take account of the likely number and age range of children present in the potential audience, bearing in mind school times, weekends and holidays.

This research investigated the central themes relating to the protection of the under-eighteens which are covered in the Broadcasting Code . The topics that were highlighted as needing specific rules included:
- violence and dangerous behaviour;
- smoking, drugs, and alcohol;
- sex, nudity and adult programming;
- religion;
- paranormal and occult;
- premium subscription services and pay-per-view channels; and
- issues associated with the participation of people under the age of eighteen in programmes.

Summary of the Research Findings

This report outlines the findings of a consultation with young people about the Ofcom Broadcasting Code which came into effect in July 2005. The research with young people was conducted within the wider context of the public consultation that was undertaken by Ofcom in the second half of 2004 when the Code was being drafted.

The main focus of the research was to consult directly with young people under the age of 18 about the meaning, appropriateness and value of key programme revisions that were being proposed for the new Broadcasting Code. The content for the consultation was derived from an analysis of the draft Code and the identification of issues within it that were thought to be particularly relevant to young people.

It was considered that people under the age of eighteen were unlikely to respond to Ofcom's consultation for its new Broadcasting Code. Ofcom therefore decided to actively seek their views. The primary topics for this research were smoking, violence, drugs, alcohol, sex, religion, and paranormal activity. For each topic the research explored general attitudes to the topics, and these young people's specific responses to how these topics are represented on television. Attitudes towards the issues of cash prizes, parental consent, product placement, and the influence of radio programming, were also looked at. The findings were used to provide a general understanding of how young people relate to the consultation topics, identify where they felt most at risk of harm from inappropriate television programming, and provide input to specific consultation questions.

Research note: The research was conducted in order to gather responses from young people, given that they would rarely normally respond to public consultations. The research was not designed to be representative of young people's viewpoints but simply to discuss the issues relevant to them in the draft Code. In this sense, their responses should be taken alongside other representations made by stakeholders and, in particular, members of the public to Ofcom's consultation. In total, 40 young people (20 males and 20 females) between the ages of 12 and 17 were included as participants in this consultation. Clearly, this relatively small sample size does not comprise a representative sample and individual responses will not necessarily reflect the opinions of others of the same age group or gender. However, the results presented in this document do provide a useful gauge for teenage opinions and direct responses to the Code revision issues. Please bear this in mind when reading this report.

Summary of key findings

Overall, the young people who were included in this consultation understood the need for some kind of regulation of TV content. In general they felt that the aim of such regulation was to protect children from harmful or misleading influences. However, none of the participants felt that they *themselves* needed such protection, and believed that the definition of a 'child' was at least a year younger than themselves. It was accepted that children did need the protection of a 'watershed', but all of the participants included in this consultation claimed to regularly watch programmes that were broadcast after the watershed.

The tendency for young people to consider themselves as being beyond the point at which they require the protection of viewing guidelines is likely to be associated with an effort to overcompensate for their age. By viewing beyond the watershed, participants realise that they are entering 'adult territory', but they explained that watching programmes that are designed for older people is a part of growing up and learning things that are required for becoming an adult. Participants demonstrated a real understanding of the potential effects that exposure to unsuitable material could cause to young people. During the research process, discussions ranged across the potential moral, psychological and physical harm that inappropriate material could cause.

Participants did express similar response patterns across the different age and gender groups in relation to how they felt that material covered in the Code should be conveyed. In essence they felt that themes that are potentially harmful should be presented in their 'real life' context. That is they should be presented in a way that is consistent with the storyline of the programme and that there must be a reason to include the material (rather than showing it for the sake of it). Portrayal should also reflect the real life consequences and effects of the issue (both positive and negative).

However, another primary finding was that participants tended to focus on the inconsistencies of media regulation. For example they could not understand how such a Code could work when there were different sets of guidelines for different media types. The main example of such inconsistencies cited by participants was the Internet. They claimed that the Internet was a main source of information for young people, and that any of the Code topics not shown on television or presented after the watershed could easily be accessed through the Internet by a young person with only moderate Internet skills.

In relation to the importance of the issues covered in broadcasting by the Code, participants tended to arrange the issues in a hierarchy of concern.

- Alcohol, smoking and religion were discussed as being of little concern to young people;

- Paranormal or occult issues, and violence were thought to be of moderate concern;

- Sex and drugs were thought to be the key issues that worried young people the most.

Youth opinions and attitudes are made up of a combination of developmental issues, peer pressure, family and cultural influences, and the messages they see in the media. The issues of sex and drugs are considered by young people and their peers to be of life changing magnitude and are therefore to be respected and handled very carefully, while the other issues are considered to be less 'dangerous'.

Furthermore, smoking, drinking, drugs, sex, religion are, to some extent, seen as your own choice. Participants argued that young people needed to make up their own minds about these issues, and seeing them in the media helped them to form their views. However, participants warned that any portrayal of such issues needed to be balanced and fair to ensure that young people do not switch off because they feel they are being 'preached at'. Violence and paranormal themes are considered to be external events that young people feel less in control of. In this sense participants related to these issues as 'things might happen to you'.

When dealing with issues covered in the Code, young people emphasise the need for realistic data that provides insight into the positive and negative aspects of the issue. They want the opportunity to make up their own minds about an issue, and react

strongly against situations where they feel that information is in some way being censored to only provide the 'acceptable' view. Furthermore, it was evident from the research that fear based messages (e.g. graphic anti smoking campaigns) provoked suspicion & distrust amongst participants. The implication from these findings was that participants felt that if material is presented either as wholly bad, or as wholly good, it could easily be interpreted as being very appealing.

Specific responses to consultation questions

The aim of this consultation was to gain general knowledge about the attitudes and opinions of young people regarding the issues covered in the programming that are thought to particularly affect youth. Their responses to specific consultation questions are provided below.

Question 4c: Are the proposed definitions of children and young persons appropriate?

The definition of 'children' in the draft Code is under 15 years. The findings of this research suggest that young people identify 'children' as being under the age of 12 or 13, which is roughly equivalent to the transition period just after entry into secondary school. Therefore if Ofcom presents regulations for 'children', 12-15 year olds will assume they are aimed at primary school aged children, rather than being aimed at their own age group as well. The word 'children' is the problem. The young people of this age that were included in this consultation prefer to be described by terms like 'teenager' or 'young person'. However, it was also found during the research that the 14-15 years age group was the category in which the psychological and maturity boundaries of participants are most tested. Therefore 15 is likely to be a suitable age cut-off point, and the Ofcom age definition is appropriate and in line with young people's views. However, there are potential difficulties associated with the communication of this age and the way it is defined in youth culture.

Question 4d: Do we need rules regarding violence and dangerous behaviour, smoking, drug taking etc as proposed in the Code or are such matters already covered by other rules?

In general, young people believe that the extent to which regulations are required is largely affected by how these issues are portrayed within the storylines in programming. Young people believe that the themes need to be expressed in ways which are:

- reflective of everyday life;

- show a balanced view of the issue;

- show the consequences of the issue where relevant;

- not 'preachy';

- not glamorised or overtly graphic.

The portrayal of drugs is the area in which young people feel they are most likely to be affected by media portrayal, and the issue that they are generally most frightened about .

Young people tend to see the watershed as an indication of when it is 'safe' for younger children to view television. In general, participants accepted the need to protect children from content that may be disturbing or misleading, even though they do not consider themselves to be in the 'child' range. The watershed concept is generally well understood by young people. However, in all groups, young people reported viewing past the guideline timings.

Question 4e: What options regarding the watershed on premium subscription services is the best and why?

Participants' opinions were split by gender in their responses to this question. Female participants believed that the watershed for these services should be moved from 2000 to 2100 to be consistent with rest of the guidelines for television (option 2 as described in the RIA, page 97). Additionally they argued for the need for better information and to prohibit free to air promotions for adult channels. By contrast, male participants argued for elimination of the watershed for premium subscription services because they believed that the purchaser of such content should have freedom to view what they want when they wanted (option 3 as described in the RIA, page 97). However, it should be noted that young males seek to find their way around protection (which is part of the appeal) and find ways to access content regardless of existing protection.

Question 4f: Which options on the scheduling of programmes regarding the paranormal is the best option and why?

Both male and female participants reported a high degree of concern for the potentially harmful effects of paranormal programming that could be construed as 'real' by young people. They describe paranormal programming that appears 'real' as that which depicts ordinary people in normal circumstances; as opposed to programming that is clearly 'fantasy' oriented which depicts unreal characters in unreal circumstances.

Participants express strong support for a 2100 watershed on 'real paranormal' for people under the age of 15 (option one as described in the RIA, page 100); and support the idea of relaxing or eliminating the watershed for 'fantasy paranormal' programming (option two as described in the RIA, page 100). In general, young people also believed that there needed to be consistency across media suppliers in relation to the broadcasting of paranormal material. They argued that consistency of rules would make it easier for parents to make decisions about appropriate viewing for their children, and that allowing the broadcasting of 'real paranormal' material in afternoon slots (point 91 of the RIA) could be harmful.

Question 4g: Should cash prizes be specifically forbidden in children's programmes?

In general, young people do not believe that cash prizes should be forbidden. They tend to have difficulty in seeing the difference between cash and a prize of equal monetary value. A secondary, but related finding in relation to this question was that young people expressed strong views about the telephone and text costs associated with phone-in competitions. Respondents were cynical about the use of premium call rates in competitions and this creates dissonant attitudes about the cash raised in competitions and the value of prizes.

Question 5g: Should the restrictions in place regarding transmitting 'adult' sex material on certain premium subscription services, PPV and PPN services be changed?

In general, female participants supported a 2200 watershed for 'adult' sex material on PPV (pay per view) and PPN (pay per night) services (option one as described in the RIA, page 93), along with the disallowing of free to air promotions for adult channels. Female participants reported that they would be more relaxed towards PPV if security was sufficient (option two as described in the RIA, page 93), but currently they felt the security measures were inadequate. The male view tended to be to lift the restrictions (option two as described in the RIA, page 93) because they believed that pornographic material was available from other sources anyway (e.g. Internet, DVD, magazines, etc.). It is also worth noting in relation to this question that irrespective of the decision made about a watershed for PPV and PPN services, security is currently regarded as poor by young people and claimed by many to be frequently broken. Furthermore, discussions in the focus groups suggested that programming with violent and sexual content will continue to be sought after by young males, who will attempt to find ways around security.

Question 7c: What are opinions regarding appealing for funds for religious programmes and/or services?

Participants did not express any major objections to the raising of funds for religious television programming. They tended to say that to disallow such an activity would be unfair due to the fact that other charitable causes (e.g. Oxfam) are allowed to raise funds through television advertising. They therefore advocated option two (described on page 105 of the RIA). In general young people believe that the issue of religion is an adult domain and if they personally had funds they would be unlikely to donate.

Question 7d: Should religious programmes on non specialist television services be allowed to recruit?

In general participants expressed high levels of tolerance for the rights of people to choose their own religious faith and to practice it in the way that their custom required. However, they were resistant towards attempts to enrol or convert others to different faiths and therefore generally felt that non-specialist television services should not be encouraged to use their platform for recruitment purposes. Young people expressed more tolerant attitudes about the idea of using television programmes as a strategy for religious recruitment within specialist environments. They tended to rationalise that in specialist environments the viewer should not be negatively affected by such strategies because they had already chosen to view that channel.

Section 3

Research Objectives

The overall objective of this qualitative research project was to directly consult with young people under the age of eighteen about the meaning, appropriateness and value of key programme Code revisions that had been designed to protect them.

The primary aim was to gather and understand young people's general views and attitudes about the key issues (e.g. smoking, violence, drugs, alcohol, sex, religion, and paranormal activity) that are referred to specifically in the Code. In addition to understanding the general climate of youth attitudes, the project sought specific input to answer the following consultation questions.

Section 4: Protecting the under-eighteens

Question 4c:	Are the proposed definitions of children and young persons appropriate?
Question 4d:	Do we need rules regarding violence and dangerous behaviour, smoking, drug taking, etc as proposed in the Code or are such matters already covered by other rules?
Question 4e:	Which of the options described in the RIA (the Regulatory Impact Assessment) regarding the watershed on premium subscription services is the best option and why?
Question 4f:	Which of the options described in the RIA on the scheduling of programmes regarding the paranormal is the best option and why?
Question 4g:	Should cash prizes be specifically forbidden in children's programmes?

Section 5: Harm and Offence

Question 5g:	Should the restrictions in place regarding transmitting 'adult' sex material on certain premium subscription services, PPV and PPN services be changed, and if so what restrictions should be in place, and on which services?

Section 7: Religion

Question 7c:	Which of the options regarding appealing for funds for religious programmes and/or services described in the RIA, section 14 of the consultation should Ofcom include in the Code and why?
Question 7d:	Should religious programmes on non specialist television services be allowed to recruit?

In addition, but to a lesser extent, a research objective of the project was to gain a sense of young people's views about two further issues:

- parental consent and the potential exploitation of minors by parents (Section 4, rule 1.24);
- product placement within programmes.

Research Methodology

4.1   Participants

Ofcom wished to consult with young people in secondary school education aged between twelve and seventeen years of age. Groups included male and female participants from a broad range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds (B, C1, C2, and D). Participants were included from rural and urban locations from a variety of areas around the United Kingdom.

Both terrestrial and multi-channel viewers were included in the sample, and participants were chosen on the basis of having younger and/or older siblings. The aim of including research participants with siblings was to enrol individuals who would be able to relate to the changes in media consumption and preferences that are associated with different age groups.

Four extended group discussions with different school year groups were conducted in the following locations:

- North London (Urban/Suburban) – Year 8 students (age: 12-13 years)
- South Wales (Rural) - Year 9 students (age: 13-14 years)
- South London (Urban) – Year 10 students (age: 14-15 years)
- Northern England (Urban/Suburban) – Year 12 students (age: 16-17 years)

4.2   Procedure

The methodology employed for group discussions was the format of 'maxi-groups'. Maxi-groups consist of a group size of 10 participants, five males and five females, and two research interviewers (male and female). In a maxi group, the whole group (who typically know each other) meets for an introduction to the project, and are then separated on the basis of gender, to form two smaller groups for in-depth discussions about the topic areas. This methodology was considered to be very useful for the project as it provided the capacity for differences based on gender to be observed. It also increased sample size beyond that of traditional mixed focus group methods.

Groups were conducted in school venues with pre-established social/working groups where participants felt comfortable and were used to expressing themselves. The discussions were framed around the perspective of 'media literacy' and encouraged participants to express their views about the issues associated with the Code revision and the protection of under-eighteens. School based groups were also considered to be advantageous as the school environment is considered to be a natural place for social discussions among young people with respect to media issues.   The duration of each group was 2 hours in length. The groups took place in October 2004.

During the introduction to the research the moderators gave a brief overview of the aims of the research and took care to establish the participants' role as the 'experts' on their own experience. It was explained to participants that there were no right or wrong answers expected during the discussion and that the purpose of the group was not to produce consensus answers. Rather, groups were encouraged to present a variety of opinions. Participants were also reassured of their right not to answer questions if they didn't feel comfortable with them. Sensitive topic areas, such as 'sex', were not introduced to the younger age groups (years 8 and 9) and were only elaborated on when they were spontaneously referred to in discussions. The research was

conducted in accordance with the Children and Young People's Unit (CYPU) Core Principles and the Market Research Society (MRS) research policy.

Discussion guide

A structured discussion guide was used to guide the consultation process and ensure consistency between groups. The discussion guide comprised an interview schedule that covered the areas of the planned Code that were thought to be of relevance to the issue of protecting under-eighteens.

Main Research Findings

Introduction to research findings

The research was conducted in order to gather responses from young people given they would rarely normally respond to public consultation. The research was not designed to be representative of young people's viewpoints but simply to discuss the issues relevant to them in what was then the draft Code. In total, 40 young people (20 males and 20 females) between the ages of 12 and 17 were included as participants in this consultation. Clearly, this relatively small sample size does not comprise a representative sample and individual responses will not necessarily reflect the opinions of others in the same age group or gender. However, the results presented in this document do provide a useful gauge for teenage opinions and direct responses to the Code revision issues.

The main emphasis of the research was the general analysis of youth attitudes toward the areas of the proposed Code that dealt with issues which were perceived as potentially harmful to young people. The research examined young people's perceptions of how the topics of smoking, drugs, alcohol, violence, sex, paranormal and religion are portrayed. While in the structure of the Code, drugs and alcohol are grouped together as one topic area, during the research it became apparent that young people naturally separated these two topic areas and were unable to discuss them concurrently. In order to accurately report participants' views, the areas of drugs and alcohol are therefore reported in two separate sections.

The study reports on both participants' general attitudes to each topic and their specific responses to how these topics are represented.   The approach was adopted because contextual issues were found to be important in interpreting young people's attitudes to the portrayal of these topics. For example, if a participant had strong feelings about a topic in general, it affected their responses about how that topic is portrayed.

As a general guide to the interpretation of findings, two broad trends are important to keep in mind.

- Media is seen as a way to prepare for life;
- Tolerance for the portrayal of topics included in the consultation increases with age.

Participants consistently focused on the use of media and its portrayal of the topics discussed during this consultation as an important source of information for how young people learn to deal with these issues. Participants generally thought that broadcasters have a responsibility to 'educate' young viewers about some of these issues that they will meet in life. Throughout the groups, words such as '*real life'*, '*every day lif*e' and '*reality'* are used as benchmarks to judge broadcasters' programming and to decide when programming is appropriate. Furthermore, it was generally believed by participants that broadcasters need to strike a balance between representing real life (which serves as education) and the possibility of having a negative influence on children and young people.

Tolerance of the way that the topics included in the consultation are portrayed by broadcasters increases with age. Older participants focus on the way content areas are presented rather than advocating external controls e.g. prohibition or later watersheds. In general, attitudes tended to be fairly consistent in the groups from Year 9 upwards (13-14 year olds). The Year 8 groups (12-13 year olds) demonstrated the strictest opinions about the consultation topics both in their general attitudes and in how they felt the topics are portrayed. It was evident that many of the topic areas had not really become a part of their everyday lives, and that they were still under the influence of parental controls and the primary school ethic of 'right and wrong'. In contrast, participants from Year 9 upwards (13-14 years and upwards) tended to express attitudes that were more influenced by a need for independence and rebellion against adult controls.

Broadcast context:

Definitions of children and young people

One of the key tasks of the consultation was to identify the suitability of the terms used to describe children and young people in the proposed Code and to test how realistic the ages defined in the Code were for young people. Across the groups, research participants were asked to give their own classifications for the different stages of youth. Initially participants were required to make individual judgements of what the different terms meant (e.g. what ages does the term 'child' describe?), and then discuss the issues in groups.

A general trend across groups and genders was that participants tended to see themselves as one year removed from their definition of the age that constitutes a child. In this sense each age group was certain that they themselves were more mature than 'children', who could be found in the year group younger than themselves. Therefore the 12-13 year olds in Year 8 defined children as those who were 11 years and under; the 13-14 year olds in Year 9 defined children as those of 12 years and under; and, the 14-15 year olds in Year 10 defined children as those of 13 years and under. The only deviation from this trend was found in the Year 12 group (17-18 years of age) that defined children as being 13 and under (male group) and 14 and under (female group).

In discussing the key differences between 'children' and their own developmental stage, participants tended to explain that the main defining features of their increasing maturity was increasing trust from adults and responsibility to make their own decisions. Terms such as 'teenager', 'young adult', and 'young person' were then introduced. It was relatively straightforward for young people to define what they meant by these terms. Generally speaking, a 'teenager' was seen to mean a person from 13 year old upwards to 15-16 years old. At 15-16 years, the term 'teenager' tended to give way to the definition of 'young adult', primarily because at this age participants' can legally engage in some adult behaviour (e.g. smoking, sex). The term 'young adult' was then seen to merge into 'adult' at the age of 18 when a person was legally recognised as an 'adult'.

The key difference between age groups in relation to these descriptors was that the younger groups (Years 8 and 9: 13 – 14 year olds) tended to see the term 'young people' as covering from their own age group until the end of secondary school. At odds with this definition, older groups (Year 12: 16-17 year olds) tended to see the descriptor 'young people' cease at the 15-16 years age group and the term 'young adults' begin. This finding highlights the aspirational nature of young people in relation

to maturity. They are both keen to see themselves as evolving and becoming more mature by identifying with those older than themselves, while at the same time distancing themselves from the year groups below them.

In addition, three key transition stages were identified across the groups that are seen as markers of development by the young people included in this consultation.

- The change from primary school education to secondary school was seen as a key transition point for participants who felt that parents and teachers recognised their growing maturity. Changes reported included their own physical development (puberty), being given more responsibility/trust by both parents and teachers, and a sense of being exposed to the real world with its problems. Participants reported that on entry to secondary school most were given their first mobile phone.

- The second key transition point was seen to be Year 9 (13-14 year olds) when young people started to make their own subject choices and began to take SATS exams. This point was emphasised as a time when young people were empowered to make their own decisions for their future and think about what type of study and career interest they might have.

- Finally, for Year 12s (16-17 year olds), passing the 16 year age limit had felt like a transition point. It was reported that important features of this change were that they had reached the sixth form and were free of wearing school uniform. At 16, participants felt that they could choose to engage in more adult activities.

"Only have to wait for 18 now, then we can do everything - legally!"
(Female, 16)

In general, groups agreed that 'children' was a term best used to describe primary school children, who fell under the full authority of teachers and parents. Young people in the groups felt that primary school children needed protection generally from both real life and media influences. The primary reason given for the need to protect children was that it was felt that children are unable to distinguish between fact and fiction. The implication was primarily that children may be scared or upset by some things they could be exposed to in the media; and secondly they might imitate activities they do not understand.

The role of television and viewing habits

A general finding of this research is that across all groups, participants felt that television plays a key role in the 'growing up' process. They recounted that the transition from primary to secondary school was matched with parents giving more permission for later viewing that contained more adult themes. The way young people differentiate between 'children's telly' and 'young people's telly', is this move from happy, safe themes to real life or more adult themes. Therefore children's media is called 'primary school TV' and shows bright colours, slapstick cartoons, The Cartoon Network, CBeebies, Disney films, and educational programmes such as 'Blue Peter'. Participants described the term 'educational' as programmes that helped children learn to make objects and learn generally about the world. In contrast, 'young people's telly' was defined as showing real life issues, showing the difficulties of relationships and life. These programmes include primarily soaps, dramas and films. Television that fell in between children and adult programming and felt distinctly aimed at teenage or young

people were channels such as Trouble TV, and cartoons such as 'The Simpsons' or 'Futurama'.

Young people emphasised that one of the reasons they felt they were given permission to watch more adult television as they moved into secondary school was because it played a role in helping them prepare to meet more adult themes in real life. As they grew older, young people expected to watch programmes on their own as well as with their parents. Participants differentiated their own television viewing habits from younger brothers and sisters (in primary school) who might still need surveillance and protection. Participants in Year 9 and higher claimed they had a high level of independence in their viewing habits.

These levels of independence tended to be matched by participant's access to television. Ninety percent of participants in the groups claimed to have a television in their own room, although most explained that they could not access cable/satellite/DTT carried programmes with their own set. Across the board, participants said that they would watch TV in their own room if they wanted to watch something different to their parents, or use it as background noise while they were doing homework. Male respondents also claimed to use the televisions located in their rooms for playing computer games, which they saw as equally important to television consumption (in some cases computer gaming was deemed more important). Furthermore, for male participants, it was clear that computers had an equal ranking in importance to television.

In terms of viewing levels, both female and male participants claimed to watch an average of four hours per day of television during the week. At weekends, male participants claimed that their viewing increased, while female participants claimed their consumption decreased as they would be with friends doing other 'stuff'. These viewing habits tended to remain fairly constant across the age groups until Year 12 (16-17 year olds) when female participants, in particular, claimed that homework and social activities took precedence.

Young people in the groups from Year 9 (13-14 year olds) upwards claimed to have a lot of freedom in their choice of programmes and at what time in the evening they stopped watching television. Watching both with parents and/or alone, 13-14 year olds claimed that as long as they could get up for school in the morning and do their homework, they were given freedom to watch television. They reported that typically they would watch the soaps with family and then go to their own rooms and watch what they wanted by themselves. They claimed that their cut off viewing time tended to be between 2200 to 2300. Year 12s (16 – 17 year olds) claimed that they were entirely independent in their viewing habits as long as they could get up for school. In practice this meant that particularly the male participants would claim to watch television until at least midnight alongside other activities such as homework.

It emerged from deeper questioning that when participants reported that '*my parents let me watch TV 'till whenever I want'*, it tended to mean '*I am trusted to make my own choice about what I watch'*. This kind of permission granted by parents was seen as taking personal responsibility and therefore part of growing up.

Year 8s (12-13 year olds) showed the most adherence to parental control, watching TV with parents up to 2200 and having programmes switched over if judged inappropriate by their parents. It was perhaps unsurprisingly that this age group quoted the highest number of programmes that they were not allowed to watch. For example, both male and female Year 8 participants listed programmes such as 'Footballers' Wives' or 'Sex in the City' as programmes they were not allowed to watch at all. They were allowed to

watch other programmes such as 'Will & Grace' with a parent. In some cases watching television with a parent was thought to be a positive bonding activity (particularly for the mother and daughter relationship) because the themes presented during programmes would be discussed (especially soaps).

Throughout the discussions the young people who were part of this consultation demonstrated a high awareness of television content and categories. One aim of the research was to gain input from participants regarding how they would categorise the variety of programmes that are available. The aim was to identify how young people categorise programming groups and what language they use to describe different groupings. The following list was assembled which is generally consistent over age groups and gender variables.

Category	Programming example
1. Soaps	EastEnders, Coronation Street, Emmerdale
2. Teenage drama/soaps	Hollyoaks, Byker Grove
3. American series	Orange County, Fresh Prince of Belair, Friends, Will and Grace, Sex and the City, Trouble TV
4. Music	MTV base, VH1
5. Drama/series	The Bill, Casualty, Footballers' Wives
6. Sport	Football
7. Scary/horror	CSI-Investigation, Most Haunted, films
8. Action/entertainment	WWE, Jackass, Dirty Sanchez
9. Fantasy/adventure	Buffy, Angel, Charmed
10. Older cartoons	Simpsons, Futurama
11. Kids cartoons	Dexter and Kenan
12. Reality	Big Brother, accident 'reality' programmes, Cosmetic Surgery Live
13. Adult stuff	sex, pornography

In general, female participants reported more homogenous patterns of viewing. They reported watching programmes about relationships and familiar characters such as soaps, series, dramas. During discussions they enjoyed talking about the different characters and swapping knowledge and insider gossip. Male participants discussed watching content based on specific interest programmes such as sport, comedy or sci-fi. They also enjoyed swapping knowledge although this tended to focus more on facts and figures. The one exception to this type of male viewing pattern was the youngest Year 8 (12-13 year olds) group who tended to view TV more than the females of their age. It is hypothesised that the Year 8 boys watched what their parents, and in particular mothers, watched as they remained under parental control. Both male and female groups claimed high levels of individual viewing of music channels.

It was evident from all groups that participants felt television, and media in general, played a key role in their lives as individuals and in group socialisation. All participants

demonstrated knowledge, curiosity and interest in the subject matter, in some cases taking ownership of certain programmes and characters. It was clear that media plays an important role in meeting the social and psychological needs of young people.

Media knowledge often provided the basis upon which young people form social bonds and territory, enabling the research participants to make and relate to friends. For example, one Year 8 (12-13 year old) girl was not allowed to watch TV past 2100 and it was clear that she was less able to partake in discussions. She openly admitted that sometimes she felt left out of conversations and felt it unfair that she wasn't allowed to watch the same programmes as other girls of her age. Television therefore served an important role in forming the basis of many of these young peoples' conversations and social interactions.

Media knowledge also appeared to be a way in which participants created social hierarchy - being seen to be 'cool' and older than they were. Media therefore allowed access to an older world introducing more adult and forbidden themes (e.g. sex, drugs, violence). Media was also seen as a way to rebel through watching more adult content which might touch upon forbidden themes. Media was also seen as a way to learn about life. It was reported that through television, participants felt prepared for serious issues when faced with them in real life such as drugs, bullying, conflict or romance. Year 8 to 10 participants (under 16's) demonstrated fairly competitive attitudes to sharing media stories and admitting likes and dislikes. Their focus seemed to be on appearing older and more mature than they are, and as such they were eager to watch the television programmes targeting adults.

It was only the oldest age group Year 12 (16-17 year olds) that started to show more relaxed attitudes about watching TV material designed for younger audiences and readily admitted watching cartoons and teenage programmes alongside more adult viewing. The sense was that now they had full permission to watch what they wanted, they supplemented adult viewing with some more 'childlike' television viewing.

The understanding of the watershed

In relation to the role of the watershed, participants defined more adult television as the programmes that are shown later on during the evening. In all groups, young people were able to identify that television started to change at 2100. There was a very high awareness of the 'watershed' concept shown by participants across age. There was moderate awareness of the actual term 'watershed', with at least one participant in each group spontaneously introducing its name. In asking young people what was the purpose of the watershed, the following quotations illustrate their understanding:

*"When my parents switch over or cover my eyes" (*Female, 12*)*

*"The stuff my parents don't want me to watch" (*Male, 13)

*"What's suitable and what's not suitable" (*Female, 13)

"When the programmes get more grown up" (Female, 14)

"Programmes that are not for children" (Male, 15)

"When they start to swear" (Female, 16)

"A thing that controls what kids can watch at what time" (Male, 16)

In summary, young people understood that the watershed has a primary role in 'controlling' the material shown on television. They described post watershed material that was more suited to an adult audience as including 'swearing, violence, sex and drugs' - activities that they recognised as being part of real adult life.

All groups understood and accepted the need for a watershed. It was understood as a protective system in place primarily for the protection of younger primary school children - to make sure that television content was shown 'within reason' and 'not for the sake of it'. The key reasons identified by young people for material being unsuitable were that children might be scared or try to copy dangerous/adult activities. Importantly, it was clear from discussions with young people, that they knew that they were viewing adult content and were aware when they were viewing past the watershed.

Older groups - Year 9, 10 and 12 - also discussed the changes in programming on late night television post 2300. They identified post 2300 programming as containing more adult sexual content. Young people also demonstrated awareness that after this time, music videos were able to show their full adult versions uncensored as opposed to being limited to edited versions earlier on in the day. Full adult versions tended to contain more swearing and more adult sexual content. Older male groups had a high awareness of the different film viewing times on the non-terrestrial channels. Several male participants were able to establish 2000 and 2200 starts for films.

Smoking

General attitudes towards smoking

The general attitudes of young people toward the subject of smoking ranged from health conscious rejection to an acceptance of smoking as a normal part of life. However independent of personal attitudes to smoking, a general trend across groups was for the identification of inconsistencies in the way that smoking is commonly managed as an issue in society. Participants claimed that they receive unclear messages about smoking from the 'adult world'. Essentially these messages comprise the competing perspectives of the serious health dangers associated with smoking and the fact that it remains a legal activity for a significant number of the adult population.

These competing perspectives create a dissonant effect in the attitudes of young people. As a result, the seriousness of the health dangers associated with smoking was doubted in all of the groups interviewed. A common example of youth attitudes is: '*Smoking can't be that bad can it, if so many adults do it?*'

Across all the issues that the draft Code intended to cover in order to protect young people, participants in groups reported that smoking is the least serious issue. Participants tended to give the following three reasons for their dismissal of smoking as an important issue:

- They reported that it is difficult to see the external effects of smoking on the body in comparison to other 'drugs';

- They observe that there are no behavioural changes when smoking in contrast to the obvious effects of drugs and alcohol;

- They experience their role models, their family and friends, smoking with no immediate evidence of ill health.

These arguments can been seen as psychological barriers to an appreciation of the health dangers associated with smoking, and also as defence mechanisms to the acceptance of their family and friends engaging in unhealthy behaviours. As such, they also provide a useful starting place for the development of health promotion strategies.

While in the youngest groups participants reported attitudes that are best described as 'anti-smoking', as participants became older they tended to express more relaxed attitudes. In this piece of research it was evident that young people from 14 years upwards demonstrated an unconcerned attitude towards smoking as a potential cause of physical harm. Participants claimed that smoking and smokers are an accepted part of everyday life. Groups demonstrated the consistent belief that most young people smoke primarily because their friends and/or parents do. While it is in fact true that environmental circumstances and related normative content plays an important role in all attitude formation, it seemed that for these respondents, in the case of smoking, the role of environment is paramount.

> '*If your parents are smoking when you are two, you're going to think that smoking is normal.'* (Male 15)

The exception from these generalisations was the youngest age group (i.e., Year 8 at 12-13 years old) who presented 'anti-smoking' attitudes. In this age group both male and female participants espoused 'parental' messages about the dangers of smoking;

and were particularly concerned about younger primary school children taking up smoking. Their strong criticism of smoking was expressed in an overtly 'authoritative' and parental tone, and suggests that this age group is still very much under the influence of adult messages and primary school type education. It should be conceded however, that among this age group an acquiescence effect is also likely, with younger participants being likely to want to express what they believe the researcher is expected to hear. In this sense the attitudes expressed may not be a clear indication of their opinions or behaviours.

Older participants were less concerned by presenting a positive or 'good' view of their behaviour. Rather, it is likely their attitudes may be influenced by a competing need to be considered 'cool' by the other young people present. Therefore the relaxed attitude that was presented may in fact have been an attempt to gain group acceptance. Despite this potential confusion and accentuation of opinion, it was clear that a difference in opinion could be observed between the Year 8 (12-13's) and Year 9 (13-14's) participants involved in the research. In general as participants became older, their attitudes became more relaxed, and their insistence that smoking is a personal choice became much stronger.

Portrayal of smoking on television

In general young people expected that smoking would be presented on television because they believe that television is supposed to reflect reality, and in reality people smoke. They felt that showing smoking on television might affect the attitudes and behaviour of children, but in light of the substantial amount of health information available and other factors such as parental smoking, participants felt that the amount of smoking they currently see on television was acceptable.

It was the youngest groups, Year 8, (12-13 year olds) that demonstrated the strictest responses to smoking on television. They readily advocated broadcasting restrictions because they felt it was necessary to protect younger people from being influenced by seeing smoking on television.

> *"If I was in charge of it I would say that big soap stars should not be allowed to smoke on TV."* (Male, 12)

However, the finding of relatively strict attitudes in the youngest age group should be considered in relation to the fact this conservatism tended to run across all of the subject matter discussed in the research. As mentioned in the general attitudes section, this suggests that this age group still operates under more of a primary school mindset of prohibition rather than having formed independent attitudes about issues.

For the rest of the year groups, from Year 9 (14 years old) upwards, attitudes towards smoking on television reflected the dissonance that they felt towards this activity in 'everyday life'. Participants considered that smoking was presented on television in two distinct ways:

- As part of everyday life as a contextual activity for characters in programmes

- As a deadly activity as evidenced in health messages conveyed through anti-smoking advertising.

In terms of daily television programmes such as soaps or dramas, young people recognised that smoking was portrayed as an integral part of ordinary life primarily because smoking actually 'is' part of ordinary life. They understood that the function of soaps and dramas was to show everyday life and everyday actions. Therefore it was

typically argued by participants that it is reasonable to see smoking on television that attempts to portray everyday life. A typical response was:

*"If no one smoked, it wouldn't be real" (*Male, 16*)*

At the same time, young people felt that the health dangers proclaimed in anti-smoking promotions tended not to be evident in the storylines of soaps and dramas. In fact, participants were unable to recall storylines that had dealt with the negative health risks that are associated with smoking. For example:

"It's true lots of people smoke on TV and you don't really see the bad effects very much" (Female 16).

Overall participants felt that smoking played a role in building the dramatic nature of characters and personalities in storylines. As one male respondent quoted:

"It makes characters on TV look tough and brave"(Male 14)

Participants felt that smokers were seen to be the 'tough guys', 'the baddies' or 'the rebels' in programmes. Older participants were able to recognise that this type of rebel image did hold appeal in terms of creating an anti-authority image that is engaging for younger people. However, they were also keen to explain that 'tough guy' imagery is built from a variety of sources in real life, like their personal experiences with older people. Nevertheless they conceded that television did reflect reality in this sense.

In addition to smoking in television programmes, young people emphasised anti-smoking promotions as the other main way that smoking was presented on television. They generally believed that any smoking shown on television programmes was balanced out by the anti-smoking health promotions.

"Any kind of cool effect is balanced out by the disgusting anti-smoking ads" (Female, 14)

Older participants believed that while younger children of primary school age could be influenced by the inclusion of smoking in television programmes, they are protected by their choice of programming. Their argument was based on their belief that children's main television consumption is focussed on cartoons, which typically do not include characters who smoke. However, it was pointed out by a few participants that there are some exceptions to this rule, in circumstances where the makers of cartoons are trying to emphasise a character is bad or from a certain time period (such as Cruella Deville in 101 Dalmatians). In short, this rationale was relatively poorly thought out as when challenged about their own viewing habits as children, most conceded that their viewing habits were not limited to cartoons.

Another factor in how participants assessed the potential effect of smoking was the fact that they compared the portrayal of smoking on television with how it is portrayed in other media sources. Other types of media, such as print were considered to show smoking in a more negative light than television. Female respondents in particular were able to quote the celebrity magazines, which photographed celebrities with cigarettes in a negative light.

"On TV they don't say how bad it is but in magazines when they show celebrities they are always saying - look at her puffing away – it's not a good thing" (Female, 13)

It was consistently difficult for participants to quote specific examples of smoking on television that might be perceived as inappropriate. Young people tended to discuss the issue more in general terms and the potential influence on primary school children watching programming before the watershed. Additionally it was felt that primary school children could be affected by the portrayal of smoking in daytime programmes such as soaps and music channels.

As previously mentioned, the youngest groups voiced the strictest attitudes towards smoking on television. Their key concern was that showing adults or young people smoking in soaps might potentially normalise the activity for primary school children. For example:

> *"Kids (meaning anyone younger than them) are easily going to copy*
> *smoking if they see it on TV and want to be like people they see smoking"*
> (Male, 13)

They also demonstrated concern that characters who smoke on television as part of their character (e.g. rebel, baddie, gangster etc) could give a wrong impression to young children if shown before the watershed, as they felt it would encourage younger children to take up bad behaviour. Music channels were also considered to be a domain where the wrong impression could be given to children, given their accessibility to younger children throughout the day. However, this attitude changes from Year 9 (13-14 years) upwards, as young people who enter teenage years express doubts that soaps or music channels create real harm or influence, given that they are only reflecting real life.

Across the groups there was a general perception that programmes that had smoking content have an influence on the 'age group younger than us' and 'at my age I can choose for myself'. Even the youngest group Year 8 (11-12 year olds) who demonstrated the strictest attitudes expressed concern for primary school children.

> *"They should never show smoking on TV - young kids would copy it"*
> (Male, 12)

This concern for the 'age group younger than us' was also evident in the older groups who demonstrated this 'backwards' looking concern. It seemed evident from the groups that the underlying message was 'it is a problem for people younger than us, but we can decide for ourselves'. Clearly this kind of position is associated with the developmental need to be considered as having independent thinking processes and to be considered as being able to make one's own decisions. Therefore, as mentioned previously, older participants demonstrated much more relaxed attitudes about smoking shown on television.

> *"The TV bosses show people smoking because they are trying to make it*
> *real and people smoke in real life"* (Male, 15)

At one level, these findings could be interpreted to imply that young people simply hold relaxed attitudes about smoking. At another level, such behaviour also suggests a compensating effect as young people attempt to demonstrate their maturity and balance the fact that some of them actually are smokers.

Interestingly, the only examples of inappropriate television programming related to smoking that were consistently mentioned by participants were the 'dripping fat' and 'voice-box' anti-smoking promotions. These health messages were seen to be inappropriate because they caused worry about parental smoking and exacerbated

young people's own feelings of concern and powerlessness in witnessing their parents' smoking behaviour. Participants expressed very strong feelings and reactions when discussing these promotions, which have certainly created a strong impact with this audience.

The dripping fat and voice box health promotions were consistently mentioned across age groups as creating fear in a negative way. The implication was that these promotions are not considered to influence attitudes about smoking, but rather create fear and guilt. Whereas young people understood that health dangers needed to be communicated, these messages were considered to be too strong or alarming. Young people tended to refer to this kind of communication as 'scare tactics'. When young people were asked if they had seen anything on TV that they felt had been alarming or shocking, these pieces of promotions were cited which confirms their impacts.

In summary, the suggestion from the young people included in this consultation was of the need to combine the two ways that smoking tends to be shown on television, the normality of smoking as a habit and the health warnings of the promotions. Young people therefore propose that it would be useful to integrate the health risks of smoking into television programme story lines to make it more realistic and to create more awareness. Otherwise they felt there was an unrealistic split of smoking being acceptable in real life television such as soaps and unacceptable in health promotion advertising. (As part of process of setting the Code Ofcom commissioned content analysis on Smoking, alcohol and drugs on television by Dr Guy Cumberbatch and Sally Gauntlett, which can be found on the Ofcom website, looking at the portrayal of these substances in the top ten programmes most watched by those aged 10 to 15 over a three month period in 2004).

Alcohol

General attitudes towards alcohol

The young people included in this consultation described different sets of attitudes toward alcohol, which were based on two different types of alcohol consumption:

- social drinking; and,
- binge drinking.

These categories were described consistently across age and gender groups.

Social drinking was defined as having an alcoholic drink with friends or as part of the normal social use of alcohol. For most of the participants, they had personally experienced alcohol in this context. For example, most had drunk a glass of wine or beer on a special occasion, such as a birthday or Christmas. Social drinking among parents and family groups was considered to be an entirely acceptable and a normal part of social life. For Year 8 (12-13 year old) participants, this tended to be the extent of their experience of alcohol although they fully recognised that they would probably start to experiment as they moved through school. However, such expectations depended also on religious and cultural backgrounds. The young Muslim participants understandably demonstrated much stricter attitudes towards alcohol consumption.

By contrast, binge drinking was reported to be a much less acceptable activity for both adults and young people to partake in. Binge drinking was described as an anti-social activity where often young people drank until they lost personal control and fell ill or became sick as a result. Young people demonstrated awareness of the potential embarrassment associated with such behaviour, as well as the practical dangers of such drinking, citing for example loss of consciousness and date rape. Binge-drinking was described as being one of the ways that young people experimented with alcohol and learned their own personal limits about the amount of alcohol they could handle.

Year 9 and 10 (13-15 year old) participants seemed to demonstrate the most relaxed attitudes towards drinking. They were the age group that demonstrated most curiosity about drinking and themes of excess. Their general response was that drinking alcohol is part of growing up and becoming an adult. Therefore they presented generally positive attitudes to alcohol, as long as people didn't drink too much to the point of making a fool of themselves. Some participants did report that they had been drunk, and that they used alcohol when they could as part of how they have fun with their friends, however they did not describe themselves as binge-drinkers.

In this sense there seemed to be a reasonably strong 'peer-pressure' element to the attitudes expressed by participants of this age. There were clearly elements of 'coolness' and being 'grown-up' associated with discussions in which participants shared their experiences of drinking. Getting drunk for the first time was reported almost as a rite of passage for both males and females. Of course it should be noted that despite researchers challenging participants throughout discussions to provide examples of their experiences, the attitudes and behaviours reported by participants in discussions about alcohol may in fact have been exaggerated because of the strong peer pressure element and social inclusion effects.

Year 12 (16-17 year old) participants expressed more mature attitudes about the process of getting drunk for the first time. They expressed strong negative judgments regarding the 'street' drinking of younger age groups, despite the fact that they had taken part themselves when younger. However, their judgement focussed on 'street-

drinking' rather 'binge-drinking', and it did seem clear from discussions that getting drunk at parties was a common behaviour for the young people included in this consultation. This Year 12 age group reported that their focus was less on the activity of drinking for the sake of it, and more on concentrating on 'getting into pubs' to enjoy the social scene associated with alcohol. One other kind of drinking mentioned by older groups was drinking 'to drown sorrows'. This was seen as a way that adults use alcohol to cope with difficult life challenges. The Year 12 (16-17 year old) participants in this consultation considered drinking for this purpose to be an acceptable and an adult way of dealing with problems.

Participants reported that they felt pubs are the epicentre of communities and they explained that pubs play an important role in how adults socialise. Achieving entry into pubs and being able to drink in public were seen as very appealing to the older groups that were involved in the research. They reported that this influenced them to try to gain entry into pubs and clubs before they were of a legal age to consume alcohol. The appeal was primarily associated with entering the 'adult domain' as pub life and alcohol was considered to be an important part of social life and culture in this country.

Portrayal of alcohol on television

One of the key themes that young people reported in all groups was that they felt the positive portrayal of alcohol on television was not balanced out by any health messages about its potentially harmful effects. While in reality this may not be the case, it was the participants' opinion that the negative aspects of drinking were not usually addressed on television. Therefore, young people felt its presence was much more unchecked in contrast to behaviours like smoking which they felt had counter balances in place. Young people explained that more 'airtime' should be given to the negative consequences of drinking alcohol.

They understood that alcohol might cause harm because its after effects are much more immediate and obvious.

> *"Alcohol changes the way people are when they get drunk or get a hangover in the morning"* (Female, 15)

Therefore, it was relatively simple for young people to deduce that by presenting alcohol on television without showing negative effects it might give some young people the wrong idea and therefore could create harm.

Another consistent theme reported across age groups was that participants felt that there were inconsistencies in the way that television dealt with youth and adult portrayals of alcohol consumption. In all groups participants pointed out that those soaps shown before the watershed all contained elements that are set in pub environments. They perceive that the adult characters in soaps are often shown to be ensconced in pubs drinking all day without getting drunk or getting a hangover. Participants felt that this portrayal was a misrepresentation of reality. In contrast, they felt that teenagers were always shown drinking alcohol in negative ways, primarily drinking to excess. This seemed to encourage a sense of resentment in respondents.

> *"I don't like the way they always show teenagers drunk, but grown-ups can stay in pubs all day like in EastEnders and not get drunk at all"* (Male 13)

> *"On TV it looks fun and it shows everyone at the pub all the time, it doesn't show the side effects and stuff"* (Female 14)

> *"All the soaps are all based in pubs, that's the centre of the story"* (Male 16)

> *"Show older people drinking too much too - take some of the wrong
> reputation off teenagers"* (Female 17)

This perception of inconsistency was felt to present only negative stereotypes of young people while at the same time providing unrealistic examples of adult drinking with no portrayal of negative consequences. Such an inconsistent portrayal was interpreted as unfair and was reported to mean to these young people that there was no 'real' reason then to drink sensibly. In addition, young people felt that they weren't being shown any positive role models of how young people should deal with alcohol responsibly.

From Year 9 (13-14 years) upwards, they openly display disbelief and rebellious attitudes towards what they consider to be unrealistic programming.

> *"The fact that Candice (on Coronation Street) is supposed to be a rebel
> and has never tried to drink underage just isn't real. I think it's fine to
> show it, you just have to show what happens when you drink too much'*
> *(Female 15)*

However, it was understood by Year 12 (16-17 year old) participants that there were difficult legal and ethical issues associated with programming that might be designed to present underage drinking in a positive light.

Participants also expressed opinions about the potential influence of some alcohol advertising. (It should be noted that the rules regarding the advertising of alcohol on television have changed since this research was undertaken. The new guidance can be found on the Advertising Standards Authority website. They focused particularly on those television advertisements promoting alcohol that showed bright colours and groups of young looking people having fun. On the whole, young people recognized that these advertisements were not aimed directly at them, but maintained that this style of advertising was highly appealing to young people. The main reason for their appeal was the youthful tone of the advertising in presenting a fun and social atmosphere that young people generally aspire to be a part of.

Participants also recognised that this type of advertising represented 'social' advertising in general for adults. Bacardi Breezer was consistently mentioned as a key brand that used these methods, however young people also reported that they liked and appreciated the quality of such advertising.

> *"There's no ads to tell you about the dangers of drinking, like the smoking
> ones. All those Bacardi Breezer ads make it look really fun"* (Female, 15)

By contrast, the sponsorship by Jacob's Creek of the American TV series 'Friends', was seen as a more acceptable communication strategy, because 'Friends' represented 'social drinking' with friends in a safe and responsible environment.

Participants generally felt that alcohol needed to be shown on television in a realistic way given its important social role in adult culture. The key guidelines that young people suggested included the need to include the consequences of drinking for adults as well as young people particularly in the soaps that are broadcast pre-watershed. Participants felt that drinking, like smoking, is an activity that is used to highlight the personality of characters in dramas and soaps. Young people accept that drinking alcohol is part of life, but claim that it would be more realistic and educational to portray the negative effects of alcohol both for young people and adults.

Drugs

General attitudes to drugs

The general attitudes and opinions expressed by participants regarding drugs tended to be quite serious in contrast to the previously reported sections of 'Smoking' and 'Alcohol' where young people tended to express relatively relaxed attitudes. For the participants in this study the topic of drugs entered a different level of seriousness, or as one respondent noted, '*drugs are in the danger zone'* (Male, 14).

In general, participants felt that drugs are definitely an issue of concern for many young people, and consistently reported that the issue of drugs is one that challenges all young people at some stage in their lives. Participants tended to report that the illegal nature of drugs was a fundamental aspect of the fear and danger associated with drugs.

This perspective was in contrast to their perspectives on alcohol and smoking where consumption among adult groups is acceptable and legal. The fact that drugs are considered to be illegal, unacceptable substances in normal social activity make them 'dangerous' for everyone (including adults). Young people report that this clarity around the issue of drugs makes it easier to accept the danger associated with their use. The main dangers associated with drugs that were reported by participants were the health and social problems associated with drug use, and fear of becoming addicted to drugs.

However, another general finding from this research was that young people seem to have a sense of hierarchy of threat associated with drugs and drug taking. Across groups participants ordered what they called less dangerous drugs (e.g. marijuana); to experimental drugs (e.g. psychedelics - ecstasy, LSD); to strongly addictive drugs that were very dangerous (e.g. heroin, cocaine). A consistently reported issue among groups, particularly for males, was their perception that inconsistencies exist legally and ethically in the fact that alcohol is considered to be a legal drug and marijuana is not.

The use of drugs was considered to be deliberate risk taking and rebellious 'youth' statement among young people. Younger participants tended to report a fear based understanding of the topic, reporting that they felt young people should be protected from drugs and that drugs are unequivocally bad; while older participants reported the need for the individual to understand the positive and negative aspects associated with drug use and then make up their own mind about their choice to use drugs or not. Despite this seemingly more relaxed trend with age, participants still tended to rate drugs as one of the most serious and important issues for young people.

Portrayal of drugs on television

One very clear finding of this research was the fact that across all groups there was a high degree of concern expressed about the potential influence of television on how and why young people form particular attitudes about drugs and drug use. As a generally hidden activity in society, it was felt that television was one of the major sources of information about drugs that young people experience. Associated with the importance placed on this issue was a high degree of awareness among groups about the potentially damaging effects of showing drug use on television. Among all the

issues discussed in the research, drugs were considered to be an important issue that young people felt that they and their peers needed protection from.

Respondents tended to report very strong attitudes about the topic of drugs. These were qualitatively more intense than responses to other issues. Such responses ranged from how drugs are generally portrayed on television to programming that was thought to be inappropriately timed. In particular, participants consistently mentioned 'Footballers Wives' as an example of a television programme with a high degree of drug content that they perceive to be scheduled too close to the watershed.

Examples of programming that are perceived to be potentially unsuitable by young people are those programmes that have a high music video content that focus on gang and rap culture. Participants tended to report that even if drugs are not explicitly shown in music videos, it is somehow implicit in the culture that is being displayed. While obviously this finding is not always an issue of inappropriate programming 'per se', it provides insight into the high degree of concern that young people feel about the potential effect of drugs and the influence of its portrayal on television.

Participants believed that when drugs are presented on television they are often connected with a 'cool' and/or 'glamorous' lifestyle without the portrayal of negative effects of drug use. There is a belief that drugs are part of a glamorous sub culture that is 'outside normal life'. Participants reported that this can have the effect of raising curiosity about drugs and drug culture and make them appear very appealing and aspiring. In discussions participants consistently reported their perception that television programming presents a strong link between drugs, success and fame. It was reported particularly in older groups that unrealistic portrayal provokes rebellious risk-taking behaviour.

> *"Sometimes when shown, it is made to look glamorous, like in 'Footballers Wives'"* (Female, 16)

> *"There are rich dealers surrounded by sexy women and fast cars"* (Female, 15)

The reality of the portrayal of drug taking on television, as assessed through recent Ofcom content analysis (referred to above), is that the messages in drug-related scenes from programmes popular among the 11-17 year old age group are negative or neutral.

However, respondents reacted against what they saw as the unreasonable representation of the people involved in the drug trade - users being 'hopeless addicts' and dealers 'pimps or gangsters'.

> *"Make the dealers less stereotypical, show that anyone can deal drugs"* (Female, 16)

> *"They always show the dealers having lots of money and having a good life, maybe they shouldn't'"* (Female, 13)

> *"Drugs should be shown more on TV, and if shown do it in 'real-life' - not all drug dealers look like pimps!"* (Female, 16)

In general participants reported valuing a more general and reasonable portrayal of drugs and drug culture as something that affects the mainstream, rather than just sub-cultures. Young people seem to value genuine attempts to tackle the issue of drugs as part of 'ordinary life'. For example the storyline presented in 'Hollyoaks' where Justin uses marijuana was reported in many groups and positively referred to for tackling the

issue.   However, from this example, it is also evident that young people prefer their stories to be realistic and not exaggerated. The following quotes are evidence of this:

"When they had Justin in Hollyoaks, that wasn't very real, he was smoking cannabis and being really silly, I thought it was patronising" (Female, 15)

"It might have been a bit stupid but at least they put it in the story" (Male, 15)

In general a high degree of fear was reported around the issue of drugs and how their portrayal may in some way influence young people. While the older participants were less likely to admit they were personally vulnerable to the influence of drugs, they were very clear that younger people needed to be protected in the way drugs are portrayed. For example:

'You need to protect younger kids from seeing drugs too much'
(Male, 16)

'They don't show drugs on TV as much as drinking and smoking which is good'
(Male, 16)

The pervasive fear around the effect of drugs led some participants to suggest very strong ideas regarding how to protect young people. For example:

"At the age of 12 drugs become reality - show them negative effects or extreme abuse" (Male, 15)

"Show the reality and the effects but only in a negative way not positive, and the cost and lifestyle that is mainly lived by these people" (Male, 14)

"Drugs shouldn't be shown in a good way so viewers believe it's wrong to take drugs" (Female, 12)

These kinds of attitudes are generally voiced by the younger participants in groups, who tended to report that any showing of drugs should be done in a negative way. Their rationale was that young people would not copy drug behaviour if it was presented negatively.

However, older participants (generally those over the age of 15), tended to see the reality of drugs as part of life and while still feeling that younger viewers need protection, they advocated a non-biased view where both the positive and negative aspects of drug use are shown on television. They tended to dispute the purely negative portrayal of drugs because they believe it leads to a reactive response from young people who also believe that there is a positive and recreational aspect to drug use. Across older groups all reported that movies like 'Trainspotting' and 'Pulp Fiction' were good and fair portrayal of drugs and drug culture because they show both the highs and lows of drug use. Characteristic examples of youth opinions are:

"They should show the whole story, the positives and negatives, so we can decide" (Male, 16)

"Try to balance it out - not too much of the good side of drugs, also show the after effects. Not to glamourise drugs but to be realistic about them. Young people need to be empowered at some point, but need to be exposed at the right amount" (Male, 17)

> *"If showing drug taking, make the effects realistic, don't patronise and show the character dying, however don't show them not being affected either. Have to get it realistic so young people aren't trying things under false pretences."* (Female, 14)

This kind of attitude is fairly typical of young people who do tend to react negatively when they feel that they are being 'told' what they should think. From the research it was clear that older groups in particular would prefer to be 'trusted' to make up their own minds about their behaviour. The question is whether harm could be caused by exposure to drug themes prior to an age when psychological maturity enables the correct interpretation of the material.

Violence

General attitudes towards violence

Discussions with participants about general attitudes around the issues of violence and risk taking revealed three major themes:

- Young people see violence as a normal part of life;

- Gender differences exist in relation to how violence is construed;

- Risk taking is considered to be fun by males;

- Young people prefer openness and education around issues of violence.

Across groups, participants spontaneously reported that violence is an important issue for most young people because it is an inevitable and unavoidable part of life. Many reported personal experiences of instances of bullying in schools, fights with other young people or siblings; and violent interactions with parents and guardians. Hence the issue of violence was readily accessible to most young people that were involved in the research and they tended to adopt a fairly 'matter of fact' attitude about it. Other examples cited by participants included domestic violence, football hooliganism and war.

A strong gender difference existed in groups in relation to their general attitudes about violence. Females tended to relate to violence from the perspective of a 'fear of being attacked' and generally being a potential victim of violent behaviour. Examples offered included the potential of being bullied or beaten up, mugged or raped. In contrast, males tended to focus on 'acting out' violent behaviour, both physically and verbally, through games and 'aggressive fun'. While it is possible that participants exaggerated their concern about these issues due to the nature of the research, the findings are reflective of participants being aware of a general field of violence in their everyday lives. An age trend was observed across female groups that is best characterised as a movement from a 'sensationalised fear' in younger groups to 'awareness of the need to know how to protect oneself' in older groups. In male groups there was a trend from acting out and 'false bravado' to confidence in strength and abilities.

Males in particular emphasized that taking risks and engaging in violent activities was a natural part of life and something that they did in order to 'have a little fun'. Taking risks is indeed part of normal adolescent behaviour in learning the extent of one's limits and abilities. It was clear that a strong group affiliation existed among participants, with males seeking to outdo each other in reporting the extent of their risk taking exploits. There were clear indications of an 'alpha male' type hierarchy in existence among the groups interviewed. Further, these issues are linked to the tendency for young males to compare with each other around issues of strength and bravery.

Both males and females across each of the age groups researched presented a very matter of fact and realistic view of violence and risk taking in society. They distinguish between 'personal violence' that is likely to affect them, and 'mass violence' that they feel is removed from them. In general, participants expressed a preference for this issue to be talked about and not denied as a part of their everyday lives. It is an issue that concerns young people and therefore they feel that adults should not ignore or dismiss the violence that occurs in their lives. While it is likely group discussion exacerbates the views expressed by the young people, this stance does suggest the

openness of young people for an educational stance around issues of violence, in that 'violence needs to be talked about'.

Portrayal of violence on television

Participants felt that when its purpose is educating or raising awareness about real life issues, violence is an acceptable part of television pre-watershed. Furthermore, they believed that more extreme levels of violence that are broadcast post-watershed via action and fantasy films/series are also acceptable, provided it is clear that the situations described in programmes are not real. Both male and female groups considered that violence was a part of real life and therefore deserved to be shown; and also that violence can add excitement to programming. The following quotations are examples of their opinions:

"I like violence in programmes, I think it makes TV exciting" (Female, 14)

"There has to be a certain amount of violence otherwise it would be boring" (Male, 13)

"Even Tom and Jerry cartoons have them fighting and they are for little kids" (Male, 12)

The young people included in this consultation did, however, understand that programmes that contain violence might scare younger children if they are shown pre-watershed.

An example of good programming pre-watershed around the issue of violence was a fight between 'Trevor' and 'Mo' on 'Eastenders'. The young people interviewed considered that the event did raise awareness and debate about the difficult issue of domestic violence. The level of violence was judged to be appropriate by most of the young people and was considered to have contained an educational element. However, the storyline did cause debate as younger participants felt it was too violent to be shown pre-watershed. For example the following contrasting views were expressed:

"I think if it helps someone in that situation see that what is happening is not right, it has got to be a good thing" (Female, 14)

"I still think little children watching that would be scared" (Male, 12)

In general, the Trevor and Mo incident was considered by participants to be appropriate because its violent theme reflected the reality of the 'home environment'. Young people felt it was acceptable to show this material pre-watershed since it was dealing with a part of real life. The caveat put on the presentation of such violence pre-watershed (in discussions with participants), was to make sure that the violence wasn't too graphic or shown for the sake of it. It was also apparent from the research that many of the young people were watching soaps and dramas with parents, and such programming serves as an important stimulus to discuss issues generally with family.

Furthermore, the older female groups felt that raising awareness about issues of violence served an important educative and protective function for women.

> *"I don't walk home now anymore, I catch the bus. I think we need to know about violent things, because then we can also do things to protect ourselves" (*Female, 17)

> *"I think people need to know what's going on, so you can look after yourself"* (Female, 17)

These kinds of attitudes indicate that the older female participants understood that violence can be directed towards women by men and they might be potential victims. Naturally, there were also different opinions expressed about what real life violence meant depending on the relative and personal experiences of violence in the neighbourhoods of participants.

> *"There is fighting where we live. I think the only people who don't want to see violence on TV are higher, like richer, people because they don't know what it's like and they don't want to see it"* (Female, 14)

> *"I think all these school fights are made up on TV. We have one fight a year here at our school. I don't think TV is very real like that"* (Male, 17)

Although the themes of violence are recognised by young people as important to be shown pre-watershed, this does not however, extend to gratuitous levels of violence shown 'for the sake of it'. Graphic violence shown in these 'real life' type programmes, such as those set in estates, the streets, school environments, were felt to have a stronger effect on young people, presenting a type of violence that was felt to be closer to home and therefore more 'personal' in feel. Whereas the themes were seen to be important, the detail was seen as less so. The detail was defined as being the blood and gory detail and personal violence.

> *"Don't show as much personal violence. Where many characters are killed in a film like Lord of the Rings the effect is less concentrated, rather than a few people are killed. Make a watershed for any kind of violence"* (Male, 17)

> *"Why do they need to show blatant realistic violence?"* (Male, 15)

> *"I think it's not so good when they show guns and knives, that goes a bit too far"* (Female, 14)

Violence with weapons, such as guns and knives, was considered to be less acceptable and ultimately fear provoking. Young people demonstrated concerns around this type of violence becoming normalised through television. These attitudes were particularly demonstrated by young people who lived in estate areas. Participants consistently made a clear distinction between weaponry and fist fighting. By contrast, in situations where violence is used for dramatic appeal e.g. fantasy/fiction in movies, participants reported less potential negative effect.

Another key opinion voiced by young people was that showing violence would have a stronger potential effect on younger boys rather than their female counterparts.

> *"I think boys are more affected than girls"* (Female, 13)

> *"If it's very real and you can see every detail, younger kids will want to copy what they see"* (Male, 15)

"Even though you know it's not real you still want to try it out" (Male, 13)

In particular, programmes such as WWE and Jackass were cited by the participants as potentially having a negative influence on younger boys encouraging copy-cat behaviour. The line 'Do not try this at home' was seen as mainly redundant by female participants who believed, in some cases, it actually served as a call to action:

"As if anyone pays any attention to 'Do not try this at Home'. I think it sounds like a dare" (Female, 13)

Female participants across groups were able to cite examples of when younger boys had attempted to imitate the moves or some of the stunts they had seen on violent television programmes.

"They should say more about WWE not being real, I've seen boys copy that and get hurt" (Female, 12)

"It helps when they (kids) know how fake wrestling is." (Male, 12)

Older male participants also discussed the potential influence on younger boys in primary school although, for themselves, they personally found this type of programming funny and entertaining. Concerns centred on young boys trying to imitate what they saw.

"When violence is 'too real' it can have a big influence on kids trying to copy what they see" (Male, 15)

On the whole, male participants tended to demonstrate a more philosophical attitude towards this type of programming, explaining that being a boy was about 'testing your physical powers' and learning to take risks.

"I think boys naturally would do those kind of things, whether those programmes are there or not, it's the little kids who don't understand you need to watch" (Male, 17)

Another major theme in participants' discussions was their belief that currently the main violation of the watershed was the News. The young people included in this study believed that news services tended to show the highest levels of violence in terms of graphic detail that could create potential harm to children.

"All that War in Iraq, you see it on the TV and also in the newspapers, I think that's where there is most violence, and that really is real" (Male, 15)

Other specific examples of 'violence' that went 'too far' or was felt to be shown 'for the sake of it' were 'Cosmetic Surgery Live' '*they just enjoy showing all the blood'*, and 'Dirty Bomb' from the BBC. However, in further discussion, respondents felt that if these types of programmes were shown after the watershed, it was up to parents and individuals to regulate the viewing of younger children.

Sex and Adult themes

General attitudes to sex and adult themes

The theme of sex was only directly discussed with the older groups that were included in this piece of research. That is, the year 10 (14-15 year old) and year 12 (16-17 year old) students. In the two younger groups discussion around the areas of sex and adult themes was not specifically included in the discussion schedule but, in all cases, the issues were spontaneously introduced into discussions by participants in their responses to general questions and other issues.

In terms of general attitudes toward sex and adult themes there are three main points to consider:

- Younger groups exhibit a high degree of embarrassment about sexual material;

- Males and females consistently differ in their attitudes about the portrayal of sex and adult themes;

- Young people are open to educational input about sexual issues.

In younger groups where the topic of sex and adult themes was not deliberately introduced by the researchers, participants expressed a general awkwardness and embarrassment about the issue. It is difficult to assess whether the embarrassment was associated with perceived lack of permission to discuss sexual material (since it was not raised by the researcher), or if it was reflective of developmental and psychological stages of participants. In older groups, where the topic was directly raised, no such reaction existed and participants seemed willing to discuss the topic openly in an unembarrassed manner.

It is likely that discussions related to sex do not enter the 'public domain' until the ages of 14 or 15 when young people feel they have some confidence in their knowledge of the area. This is not to say that young people under this age do not talk about sex, but rather that they are unlikely to bring it unprompted into a discussion that is not directly about sex. Of course this kind of behaviour is also representative of general societal attitudes to sexual material that is 'not talked about'. It would have been informative in terms of the Code review to conduct more direct discussions around such issues with the young groups. However, the obvious ethical constraints on such research prevented this. The fact that single gender groups were conducted was advantageous, as it meant that younger groups shared some information about their attitudes toward programmes containing sex and other adult themes.

Males and females consistently differ in their attitudes to the portrayal of sex and adult themes. In terms of general attitudes, it can be broadly said that the female participants tended to express more criticism and negative judgement about sexual themes, while males groups tended to express a higher degree of curiosity and interest in the area. The females involved in the discussions tended to be most concerned about the possible exploitation of women through pornography. However, the definition of pornography that groups expressed ranged from nudity to explicit sexual acts, implying a lack of consistency in how young women construe pornography. In general, younger groups were more conservative in their views of what constitutes pornography, while older groups expressed more relaxed attitudes about nudity, claiming that it is 'part of life'.

Females were also generally critical of any stereotyping of women in gender roles, and they tended to suggest that the way in which women are presented in terms of sexual behaviour is influential on the way that women are viewed in general. In the oldest group that was consulted (16-17 year olds), quite sophisticated views about the relationship between sex and emotion were expressed. Furthermore, female groups were critical of males, whom they perceived as lacking in maturity about sexual matters.

In male groups a less critical attitude was adopted about sex and adult themes. In general, males expressed greater curiosity and more lenient attitudes towards sexual material than females. Researchers observed that male participants were keen to impress with their knowledge of sexual material, and that there seemed to be a strong social pressure to participate in discussions of sexual matters. While the small sample size in this study limits the extent to which generalizations can be made, this finding is reflective of general male attitudes toward sexual material. It was also found that older male participants were more likely to be able to express themselves clearly and were less embarrassed to introduce an emotional component to their discussions about sex.

Another finding that is reflective of general attitudes about sexual material and adult content is that of a certain degree of openness toward an educative component in the topic. While it is clear that this issue cannot easily be considered independently of participants' attitudes to media portrayals of sex, it does provide some insight into the general need in young people to gain information about sex from reliable sources. It was consistently reported in groups that media resources (e.g. television and Internet) were their main sources of information about sex. The issues of contraception and teenage pregnancy were raised in groups as areas where they would like to gain more information. Participants did not typically report any need to protect young people from ordinary sexual material or nudity, and only graphic or explicit material was thought to be of any potential harm.

Portrayal of sex and adult themes on television

With regards to sexual content on television, both male and female groups perceive key differences in programming during daytime and 'late night TV'. Whereas the subject was not introduced to the youngest respondents, both male and female groups did bring up 'sex' spontaneously as one of the key changes in television. It was recognised that younger children in primary school did need to be protected from this issue, but in general participants felt that the levels of sex and adult themes shown in pre-watershed programming such as soaps and dramas, were acceptable. The right level tended to mean sexual relations being suggested and alluded to, rather than graphically represented in detail.

"TV programmes have got it right as it is. You never see much on TV anyway" (Female, 14)

"Late night TV needs to have more warnings and later times, day time TV has sex viewing perfect" (Female, 14)

"I think it should stay the same, like in the soaps they do it but the door shuts" (Female, 15)

"I think it's fine the way it is, younger children shouldn't be watching the adult stuff anyway" (Male, 16)

Post-watershed, there is a profound difference in response from male and female respondents to the portrayal of sex and adult themes. Among female participants in the youngest groups, responses included embarrassment and disgust. In the older groups, more ethically based opinions were expressed about the detrimental portrayal of women in sexual programming. In contrast, younger male participants demonstrated a range of feelings including embarrassment, curiosity and bravado towards sex on television, while older males were able to articulate their own preferences and appreciation of sexual programming.

For older male participants, as long as the right times were set up to ensure older viewing, and the sexual content wasn't violent or 'perverted', they demonstrated fairly relaxed attitudes towards sexual programming. They pointed out the inconsistencies between legal ages for sexual acts versus the TV programming laws.

> *"Not many things are wrong - just keep a line between sex and violence".* (Male, 16)

> *"At 16 you're allowed to do it and at 18 you're allowed to watch it - that doesn't make sense!"* (Male, 16)

More critical attitudes regarding the way sex is presented started to be displayed by female participants when it comes to late night viewing and what they define as pornography. 'Porn' is a term which tends to be used loosely as a term by female participants to classify casual sex scenes that they perceive are designed primarily for a male audience. TV programmes that they particularly criticised tended to be shown close to the watershed like Footballers Wives'.

> *"Show sex not just 'having it off' like in Footballers Wives'"* (Female, 14)

> *"Show it in more positive ways, sex isn't all porn"* (Female, 13)

> *"There's two kinds of sex on TV, normal sex and then porn which is later, for men"* (Female, 14)

> *"Show sex in a real way, not pornographic like Channel 4, Five and Footballers' Wives'"* (Female, 16)

The female focus seems to reflect a need to see a more realistic portrayal of sexual relationships that reflect a more equal one between women and men. Older female participants, who have started experimenting with relationships, reported that they felt that the portrayal of sexual relations was lacking in emotional content. They felt that the focus was purely physical and did not represent the intimacy required in 'real life' relationships.

Music videos were highly criticised for overtly sexual content that might be accessible to younger children. Two videos that were mentioned across the female groups as potentially problematic were 'The Street's: Blinded by the Light', and 'Christina Aguiluera's: Dirty'.

> *"Music videos, too many naked women! That one with the thongs, it's too much"* (Female, 16)

> *"Music videos are quite provocative and sexist in a way"* (Female, 13)

> *"That Christina Aguilera video goes too far, it's disgusting"* (Female, 12)

Older female participants' key concern is that television reinforces and perpetuates 'degrading' imagery around women as sex objects. For this reason, they feel that digital free to air promotions for adult channels shouldn't be allowed or at the very least should be protected by a PIN code . Female participants quoted examples of younger male siblings staying up to watch free to air promotions for adult channels. While they understood that pornography was considered by some as entertainment, they expressed the viewpoint that sexual entertainment should be more realistic and present some of the educational sides of sex regarding teenage pregnancy, contraception and sexually transmitted infections. Female participants also voiced a concern about inadequate presentation announcements for later night viewing on some of the channels such as Bravo.

For the majority of older male participants, more sexually graphic material was seen as being broadcast at the appropriate time - post 2300. They believed that this protected young children from seeing it. The older males tended to argue that the whole issue of sexual material and television media was unnecessarily exacerbated because television is the least easy medium through which to gain access to such material. They consistently highlighted the Internet both as a source of pornographic material should they wish to use it, and as a potentially more damaging unregulated source of information that could cause harm to children.

Paranormal

General attitudes to paranormal

The language and definitions that young people use in discussions about paranormal and occult activity are very broad, and there was a sense from groups that 'paranormal' themes had certainly entered the mainstream of youth culture. In general paranormal was defined by young people in terms of three different categories:

- Fantasy with paranormal themes;

- Alien themes; and,

- Ghosts and hauntings.

The area of 'fantasy with paranormal themes' referred to programming that incorporated the realm of fantasy but included paranormal themes like witchcraft, vampires, magic and ghosts. Often this category was reported to include a high degree of action, fighting or suspense. A characteristic theme in young people's discussions about this material was that they felt it was clearly 'not real', hence the description of 'fantasy'. The material presented in this genre was described in terms of entertainment and fun, rather than provoking fear and concern. It was, however, noted by some participants that young children could be frightened or scared by such material.

Participants reported that paranormal fantasy usually had very strong ongoing plots and developed relationships between characters that made them very appealing. Some participants described them as 'soaps' for a younger generation. In general it was felt that fantasy programming with paranormal or magical elements was also very 'trendy' and a way for young people to buy into an alternative reality. While it was also suggested that on occasions some young people may take this category a little too seriously, the majority felt these types of programmes are relatively harmless.

The young people interviewed referred to material that incorporated 'Alien themes' as part of how they defined paranormal and occult concerns. In particular they focussed on 'Alien abduction and conspiracy', which they saw as potentially more frightening and dangerous than fantasy based themes. It is important to note that participants made a strong delineation between 'Alien' themes and 'Science Fiction' themes. The main difference for them is that Science Fiction is clearly not true and is created for entertainment purposes, in the same way that fantasy programming with paranormal themes is. By contrast, it was felt by participants, particularly the males, that the category of 'Aliens and Alien abduction' could be true, and was therefore much more 'real life' than fantasy programming.

In general, the young people that were included in the research were quite open-minded about the possibility of life on other planets and alternative explanations of reality. The incongruence of this possibility with traditional and adult models of the world appeared to be appealing, as was the simple thought provoking nature of challenging traditional assumptions. For example, participants were quick to engage in discussions about the potential 'conspiracy theories' and 'cover ups' around these issues. However, the fact that they associated this domain with the paranormal and supernatural events is testimony to an underlying uncertainty about the validity of this area. The key feature in participants' explanation of alien themes in the paranormal category is that it is 'outside normal reality'. In general it was thought that this area is

potentially frightening to children, and potentially confusing to other young people if they get too engrossed in the area.

By far the most concerning category of paranormal programming for the young people in this study was that which concerned real life examples about haunted houses and ghosts. The particular concern was around the presentation of this material in relation to personal experiences. In general participants felt that the portrayal of these events in relation to everyday life was an area of concern. While participants felt that there were obvious differences in potential effects of such programming, based on how much a young person believed in paranormal events or not, it was generally argued that if these events are presented in normal everyday contexts, it is harder for most young people not to identify with them. It was reported that shows about hauntings with a horror or fear element were likely to concern young people who did not already have a strong opinion about their belief in the paranormal or not. It was generally felt that if participants were undecided in their belief systems, they could be influenced by programming that frightens them. In general across groups, it is reasonable to conclude that paranormal events which are not presented as fantasy are potentially frightening for young people.

Another general finding from the research was that participants felt that the area of paranormal and occult programming was very similar to that of religious programming. For example, in older groups it was common to have comments about the 'supernatural' basis of both paranormal and religious belief systems, and that it would be problematic to have a set of rules that was applied to one area but not the other. In general it was felt that paranormal systems, which some participants believed in, was as equally valid as a religious belief system. Other participants highlighted issues of the paranormal as important in helping young people work out what they believe about the world. There was a general sense from participants that they felt that religion was the only 'sanctioned' way to talk about spiritual matters and the 'unseen world'.

In summary, it was felt that the major issue in the presentation of paranormal material should be the clear differentiation of 'fantasy' from real life events as children may get the two confused. Older respondents tended to be quite concerned for those younger than them and suggested the need for protection. Further, the older groups demonstrated a high degree of respect for the dangers of 'messing with' or 'copying' paranormal phenomenon through séances and games with paranormal themes. Of course this kind of attitude implies a belief in the possible effects of such practices which, in itself, says something about the attitudes of young people towards the paranormal.

Portrayal of paranormal on television

The young people included in this consultation tended to take the theme of paranormal on television fairly seriously. They expressed strong attitudes about the potential of paranormal type programming to cause fear and distress in younger children. The major concerns expressed about the effects on younger people were nightmares, and the potential for copy-cat type activities that could cause distress.

> *"Could be dangerous if they show instructions on how to contact the dead'* (Male, 15)

> *'I think people could have really bad nightmares"* (Female, 16)

> *"Don't mess with it"* (Male, 16)

> *"Children shouldn't watch it because they would believe in it"* (Female, 13)

Participants clearly differentiated between fantasy/adventure type programming such as 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer', 'Charmed' and 'Angel' and "factual entertainment" type programmes, such as 'Most Haunted' and 'Derren Brown'. Young people explained that fantasy type programming is obviously not real with its emphasis on costumes, make-up, props and special effects. They believe therefore that fantasy programming doesn't hold much influence or potential for creating harm unless someone is either very young, or immature, or becomes obsessed with the material or storylines of the shows. Others reported their belief that this type of programming has a completely positive effect.

> *"Things like Buffy, Angel, Charmed encourage imagination"* (Male, 16)

However, programmes that are presented as real life and appear to be based on scientific proof were felt to be more potentially harmful, particularly to younger children. Compared to other topic areas explored in this study, the young people interviewed seemed to find it relatively easy to think of examples of potentially inappropriate programming. One example given was 'Crossing Over', with John Edward, shown allegedly contacting the dead. The fact that people's personal and emotional reactions are shown seemed to have a strong effect on this age group.

Derren Brown was also criticized for showing Russian roulette and also a séance with teenagers said to have committed suicide. The point of contention was that the group of teenagers who had supposedly committed suicide were the same age as group participants, and even though the situation was not real, it elicited a strong reaction. Young people in the groups seemed to have strong memories of how this made them feel on viewing.

> *"Even if you say it's fake it still seems real"* (Male, 13)

> *"Not over the top, as it can cause nightmares"* (Female, 16)

There were some young people in the groups who did not think these programmes were potentially harmful, but rather that they were funny and dramatic to watch. On the whole, these participants tended to be non-believers of the paranormal. They were able to enjoy the 'horror' entertainment aspect as if this was a fantasy production.

> *"I think it's up to the parents to decide, I don't think it's a big deal"*
> (Female, 14)

> *"I don't think there is a problem with paranormal programmes, it is up to the person's imagination"* (Female, 17)

For some of the research participants, paranormal programming was considered to be a way of making sense of the world using alternative belief systems compared to the mainstream religions. It was also seen as a rebellious statement tied up with 'gothic' dress codes and a general rebellion against adult authorities. In fact the paranormal was seen by the majority of participants to be close to religion in the sense that it potentially has an effect on belief systems.

However, all participants demonstrated concerns for younger children who aren't so easily able to differentiate between fact and fiction. Potential dangers that young

people identified included the influence of changing children's mind sets and belief systems, giving people an irrational view of the world.

> *"It should not be too serious so it doesn't change people's beliefs and doesn't affect people"* (Female, 12)

> *"I think that it is not ok when people influence other people, saying that they've contacted their dead relatives when really they're just getting these people emotional over nothing. I don't think there should be a restriction but I don't think it should be shown on mainstream channels"* (Male, 15)

> *"Before they show it on TV they should mention it's not real"* (Male, 13)

Religion

General attitudes to religion

Participants varied in relation to their opinions about religion. While participants were not directly asked about their religious beliefs, many volunteered their faith affiliation (or agnosticism or atheism) during the discussions about religion and religious programming. In general, participants who did have a religious affiliation did not appear to have difficulty in expressing that within their group, and, those who did not have any religious belief system seemed to be comfortable in sharing that. Participants seemed to understand the need for tolerance and understanding within the context of discussions about religion.

Across all age groups involved in this research the most common general attitude expressed about religion was the need to be inclusive of difference and to educate people about the beliefs of different religious faiths in order to address stereotypes and potential conflict. A strong ethic existed among participants to emphasise the need for respect and equality in relation to religion. This ethic was consistently expressed by both males and females.

As participants increased in age the complexity of the 'respect ethic' also developed. In younger groups a general belief in the need for respect for difference was emphasised with an associated expectation about each group's right to be left alone to believe what they wish as long as they do not attempt to influence others. In older groups the importance of religious and social freedom was emphasised. In this sense freedom of religious belief systems served as the basis for the need for groups to also have socio-cultural and political freedom.

The stereotypical portrayal of 'Muslims as terrorists' was spontaneously discussed in the majority of groups, during general discussions about religion. In all cases this issue was vigorously discussed as unfair and ignorant. This was particularly true for older groups where a critical view of the war in Iraq was generally expressed. In these groups, participants felt that the war was unjust, and unnecessarily created difficulties for Muslim groups in the UK. In this sense the young people involved in the research saw religion as inextricably linked to political and social issues.

When asked to discuss religious programming, respondents tended to imagine documentary style programming that explained the tenets of a particular religion, or to imagine the broadcasting of religious services. In general these sorts of programmes were not reported to be of interest or appeal to young people. The main interest in religion, in relation to its presentation in the media, was reported to be where it is associated with the abuse of religious freedoms or the violation of associated social and political rights.

Portrayal of religion on TV

Across the different age and gender groups, participants seemed fairly relaxed about religion being shown on television. The only two recurrent provisos given were that religion should be expressed in an inclusive way and that it should not in anyway force anyone else to believe. These relaxed attitudes undoubtedly reflect the perceived general lack of interest in religious programming from children and young people. No one demonstrated interest in watching this programming area. Rather it was seen as a topic area primarily for adults and parents.

However, on deeper discussion, young people did suggest that if religious channels are allowed to broadcast on TV, they should have to follow certain guidelines. Participants were clear that each religious channel shouldn't be allowed to attempt to enrol or convert others in a forceful manner and that they shouldn't put down any other religions. On the whole, young people felt that if each religion had their own channel, this would ensure that the people who wanted to watch it, could.

> *"Religious channels are alright, as long as they're not preaching"* (Female, 14)

> *"I think it's fine to have religious channel, people can choose to watch it"* (Female, 14)

> *"Advertise but don't force anybody to go to that religion'"* (Male, 14)

> *"Religion is fine to show on TV as long as it's respectful to other religions"* (Male, 15)

Discussion tended to focus on cultural, religious and racial inclusiveness as young people across the groups were concerned that different religions each had the right to broadcast. It was when culture and race were included under religion that young people demonstrated stronger opinions and feelings towards its presentation. One key area where young people felt religion was portrayed inappropriately is the 'News'. It was generally felt by both non-Muslim and Muslim participants in the groups, that UK News presented Islam as a religion for fanatics and for terrorists. Across the board, this was seen as unfair in presenting only one viewpoint and a broad stereotype.

> *"It isn't portrayed realistically, not all Muslims are terrorists, not all Christians are over the top"* (Female, 17)

In discussing the possibility of religions using broadcasting to ask for funds, this triggered a mixed response from within the groups. For some participants, they felt this was inappropriate because some religions wouldn't have the money to have their own channel, therefore putting them at a disadvantage. For other participants, they felt that this was no different to charities who asked for money, given the social work conducted often by churches.

> *"I think it's ok for churches to ask for money on TV, Oxfam does"* (Male, 14)

Again, fears centred on vulnerable people being influenced into giving money, although most young people in the groups felt that they and younger counterparts were unlikely to be viewers or donors. The key concern remained the possibility of condoning racial tension and stereotyping. Young people reiterated that it was important to ensure that any religious broadcasting didn't incite hatred against other religions or belief systems. Such attitudes were expressed across the groups and are summed up by this female participant:

> *"It's good to have religious channels because people can watch it, but it mustn't be racist"* (Female, 15)

Additional information

Pay Per View (PPV) and premium subscription film services

In general participants reported very strong awareness of the watershed and the associated scheduling decisions after the watershed for stronger material on terrestrial programming (e.g. the ex-ITC Code rule that British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) '18' rated films should not be broadcast before 2200). With respect to 'watershed' times for pay per view programming and premium subscription film services, female participants tended to assume the same regulations applied as on terrestrial channels while male respondents demonstrated high awareness of the different 2000 and 2200 starting times for films with higher ratings. Males felt that pay per view channels and premium subscription film services should have a different or no watershed times because the people buying the programming had paid extra and therefore should be allowed to dictate their own viewing choices. By contrast females felt the same rules should apply as terrestrial channels, so parents could regulate the viewing of younger people.

In general, PIN codes were considered to be a good idea for the protection of minors, but male respondents claimed that they had made efforts to bypass PIN codes as barriers to their viewing choices. They claimed to have found ways to access PIN codes as the following quotes demonstrate:

> *"I set up my mum's TV set - she hasn't got a clue"* (Male, 15)

> *"It's usually the last four digits on the back of the card"* (Male, 13)

> *"Find the instructions that came with first bill"* (Male, 14)

> *"You watch your parents use the pin"* (Male, 15)

Few girls knew their household PINs, but generally believed that they were inadequate as devices to prevent males from viewing material that was unsuitable. For example they advocated the introduction of more complex PINs that changed regularly, and the implementation of PINs for movie previews.

Radio

While the focus of this consultation was on television viewing habits, additional material was gathered about radio listening in an effort to increase understanding of the Code issues. All groups claimed to listen frequently to the radio in order to access music content. None of the participants reported an interest in other radio functions such as 'talk back'. The main places that participants reported listening to the radio was in their bedrooms, at breakfast time, and on the way to school with a parent. The favourite channels reported by participants included in this consultation were Kiss, XFM, BBC Radio 1, Capital Radio, local stations, and pirate radio (London: soundzfm, delightfm). Their favourite DJ's were Bam Bam (Kiss), Chris Moyles and Emma B (Radio 1), and Justin Wilkes (Capital Radio). However, when listening to the radio they said they mainly focussed on types of music (e.g. RnB, Hip Hop, Dance, and Metal) and music artists rather than on DJ's.

One recurrent theme across male groups was the growing effect of the Internet on listening.

"I listen to radio more on the Internet now than on the radio" (Male 13)

It was reported that the text and imagery on radio Internet sites could potentially expose young listeners to more adult content. Participants also reported that the play-back feature (choose your programme) available with many digital radio stations, exposes young people to content that would normally be broadcast very late at night, that they would not usually hear during actual broadcasting times. Another theme expressed was around the growing reliance on MP3 players which participants said added a new portability to music listening so that they were not as dependent on actually listening to the radio anymore. In that sense music had become more of a computer based activity for many of the young males interviewed.

In general, it was very difficult for participants to talk about radio in relation to the Code themes discussed during this consultation. It seemed difficult for them to apply the same sort of reasoning to the auditory content of radio as they did to the imagery of television. The examples of inappropriate radio broadcasting that participants could express were incidents of swearing on live shows, interviews about drugs or sexual material at inappropriate times, and the broadcasting of bad language in music lyrics at times when children may be listening. However, it was generally felt that radio content was not really potentially harmful for children. For example:

"A bit of swearing never hurt anyone, and they hear that all the time anyway" (Male, 14)

Product placement

In all groups participants recognised that advertising products by placing them in television programmes would have an effect on young people's perceptions. For example, it was felt that if a specific shoe brand or clothes brand was worn by a well liked soap star, it would influence young people to buy those brands. Participants tended to express a high degree of distrust and cynicism about the intentions of large companies in their efforts to elicit brand loyalty. They believed it was entirely possible that companies would pay to have their products placed in popular television programmes, and a few participants even introduced the idea into the discussion that companies might engage in 'subliminal priming'.

Participants tended to present a hierarchy of attitudes in relation to this issue. They thought that it would be much worse for a large multinational company to engage in product placement than it would be for a smaller local company to do so. Furthermore they felt it would be unfair if product placement was allowed because it would give an unfair advantage to larger companies that could afford the costs of advertising. These views were, however, more relaxed in older groups where participants took contextual issues into account when making their decisions. For example older participants were more relaxed about product placement because 'it happens with advertising anyway', and they reported that products were 'placed all around them' in everyday life.

Parental consent

In relation to the issue of parental consent being required for children to participate in television programmes, it was generally felt that parents and children should have an

equal say in the consent process. Participants reported that they felt that it was possible on occasion for children and young people to be forced to be involved in television programmes because their parents were over-interested in the child's success or wanted to exploit a talent that the child had. For example it was felt that programmes like 'Britain's Brainiest Kids' could constitute a form of abuse if the child did not really want to be involved. That is, their involvement was decided by the parent without consultation with the child. Other examples where this may occur were game-shows for children, spelling competitions and science programmes.

Cash prizes

Participants were also consulted about the issue of 'cash prizes' and their suitability for young people. In general, participants reported that they felt that there wasn't much difference between cash and competition prizes. Many explained that competition prizes were often uninspiring, and that cash could be used to buy something that the winner preferred. It was not thought that a cash prize would make the competition seem more like gambling. Discussions about this issue tended to gravitate towards an analysis of the whole competition process. In many cases participants felt that competitions were too easy and did not really give them a chance to express their skills or knowledge. In many groups discussions also emphasised the high cost of competition phone calls. Participants tended to think that the high cost to register for the competitions was exploitative and used by television channels primarily as a fundraising activity.   Furthermore, it was consistently reported that participants felt that if channels were allowed to raise cash by expensive phone tariffs in competitions then cash prizes should not be prohibited.

Section 6

Conclusions

Summary of how to deal with Code issues

Overall, the young people who were included in this consultation understood the need for some kind of regulation of TV content. In general they felt that the aim of such regulation was to protect children from harmful or misleading influences. However, none of the participants felt that they themselves needed such protection, and believed that the definition of a 'child' was at least a year younger than themselves. It was accepted that children did need the protection of a 'watershed', but all of the participants included in this consultation claimed to regularly watch programmes that were broadcast after the watershed.

The tendency for young people to consider themselves as being beyond the point at which they require the protection of viewing guidelines is likely to be associated with an effort to overcompensate for their age. By viewing beyond the watershed, participants realise that they are entering 'adult territory', but they explained that watching programmes that are designed for older people is a part of growing up and learning things that are required for becoming an adult. Participants demonstrated understanding about the potential effects or harm that exposure to unsuitable material could cause to young people. During the research process, discussions ranged across the potential moral, psychological and physical harm that inappropriate material could cause.

Participants did express similar response patterns across the different age and gender groups in relation to how they felt that material covered in the Code should be conveyed. In essence they felt that themes that are potentially harmful should be presented in their 'real life' context. That is, they should be presented in a way that is consistent with the story line of the programme and that there must be a reason to include the material (rather than showing it for the sake of it). Portrayal should also reflect the real life consequences and effects of the issue (both positive and negative).

However, another primary finding was that participants tended to focus on the inconsistencies of media regulation. For example they could not understand how such a Code could work when there were different sets of guidelines for different media types. The main example of such inconsistencies cited by participants was the Internet. They claimed that the Internet was a main source for young people who wanted to gain information, and that any of the Code topics not shown on television or presented after the watershed could easily be accessed through the Internet by a young person with only moderate Internet skills.

In relation to the importance of the issues covered in the Code, participants tended to arrange the issues in a hierarchy of concern.

- Alcohol, smoking and religion were discussed as being of little concern to young people;

- Paranormal or occult issues, and violence were thought to be of moderate concern;

- Sex and drugs were thought to be the key issues that worried young people the most.

Youth opinions and attitudes are made up of a combination of developmental issues, peer pressure, family and cultural influences, and the messages they see in the media. The issues of sex and drugs are considered by young people and their peers to be of life changing magnitude and are therefore to be respected and handled very carefully, while the other issues are considered to be less 'dangerous'.

Furthermore, smoking, drinking, drugs, sex, religion are, to some extent, seen as your own choice. Participants argued that young people needed to make up their own minds about these issues, and seeing them in the media helped them to form their views. However, participants warned that any portrayal of such issues needed to be balanced and fair to ensure that young people do not switch off because they feel they are being 'preached at'. Violence and paranormal themes are considered to be external events that young people feel less in control of. In this sense participants related to these issues as 'things might happen to you'. This explains some of their stronger reactions to the television content cited in earlier sections.

When dealing with issues covered in the Code, young people emphasise the need for realistic data that provides insight into the positive and negative aspects of the issue. They want the opportunity to make up their own minds about an issue, and react strongly against situations where they feel that information is in some way being censored to only provide the 'acceptable' view. Furthermore, it was evident from the research that fear based messages (e.g. graphic anti smoking campaigns) provoked suspicion & distrust amongst participants. The implication from these findings was that participants felt that if material is presented either as wholly bad, or as wholly good, it could easily be interpreted as very appealing.

ANNEX 1: Further quotations

Further quotations and recommendations from participants about each consultation topic

Smoking - Male

- *If I was in charge of it I would say that big soap stars should not be allowed to smoke on TV. Male 12*

- *I would give people a licence to see smoking on TV at 16 but give parents a choice as well, to be a judge on whether their child is mature enough. Male 12*

- *Less smoking on TV but don't cancel it out totally because it will be so unrealistic. Show effects of what it does, make them harder to buy. Male 13*

- *Smoking should not be shown on TV at all if it's for advertisement reasons. If it is needed to reflect characters then it is acceptable, maybe a watershed of 7 o'clock for smoking on tele should be in place. Male 14*

- *I think that if there is people of the age of 13 out there smoking, then it's not that bad to show it on TV - but show a warning as well. At the end of the day it's your life. Male 15*

- *I think that smoking shouldn't be allowed in soaps, well not all the soaps, just certain soaps. Male 15*

- *Smoking should be controlled in soaps so the ideas don't influence children. Male 15*

- *I think that Ofcom should just leave people to do what they want, 'cause it's their own life and nothing to with Ofcom. Male 15*

- *Restrict smoking on day TV and ban all advertisements on smoking, stop children seeing celebrities smoking. Male 16*

- *If they show an 'under age' smoker it should be on at a later time. Male 16*

- *It should be choice of the individual to smoke or not, but show the downside of smoking as well. Male 17*

- *When younger kids smoke on TV, you have to show both sides, for example when a kid or adult smokes continuously, you have to show that they are gonna die or it fucks up your system inside. Male 17*

Smoking - Female

- *They should show loners so people won't want to smoke, if they see it they won't want to be them. Female 12*

- *If you were to show younger children smoking I think it would have an influence because kids might think if they can do it, why can't I. Female 12*

- *If it wasn't educating people not to smoke, then the people smoking should be over 18. Female 13*

- *I think it is Mums and Dads that smoke - they make children want to smoke because they don't think there is any harm. Female 13*

- *If there are characters on TV who have always smoked, there should be repercussions of their actions so that you can see how it can affect you. Female 13*

- *I don't think there should be a boundary on smoking as it is a casual thing as people smoke around you all the time. Female 14*

- *I think that smoking isn't a big deal, and the adverts are extremely disturbing, everyone smokes so what's the difference anyway. Female 14*

- *It's not in kids' shows anyway and they have all those 'smoking kills' adverts that counteract. Female 14*

- *I don't think there is that much smoking on TV. Young children mostly watch cartoons and anyways if their parents don't want their child seeing people smoke, they shouldn't let them watch that programme. Female 15*

- *I don't like it when I see programmes on at an early time with teenagers smoking because if my younger sister saw the programme she could think it's right to smoke. Female 15*

- *It shouldn't encourage in the way that is in some music videos like it's cool and makes you hard. Female 15*

- *Make it less stereotypical - e.g; Byker Grove - Boy bullied into start smoking! It's never like that… Female 16*

- *Smoking is more everyday life anyway, smoking happens before a lot of people get to 16. Female 16*

- *I would show the reality of smoking and not try and hide it. I don't think many people are just 'pressured into it'. Female 17*

- *I don't think smoking on television makes any difference to young children. We grow up around smokers but get told it's wrong to do it. Female 17*

Alcohol - Male

- *It shouldn't be shown on TV because people in real life die from these things. Male 12*

- *Drugs and alcohol should be taken seriously and stars should try to reach out to younger people and tell them about their own lives. Male 13*

- *I think if the effects are shown then fine it can be used on TV. Male 13*

- *Show the reality for drunk driving, don't just show them having a good time - show the consequences. Male 14*

- *They should show the effects of drugs and alcohol because if you sniff it you can loose part of your nose and alcohol can damage your kidney and liver. Male 15*

- *It is fine to show on tele because it is a reality. They should not show it to advertise. They should not advertise alcohol when kids are watching. Male 15*

- *In music videos most contain drugs or alcohol but it's their choice and their video. Male 15*

- *They shouldn't show it on music channels and if they do show it than they should put a moral to it. Male 15*

Alcohol - Female

- *There can be social drinking but it shouldn't be too much alcohol. Female 12*

- *The age of people shown drinking should be about 15-19 years old. Female 12*

- *They should show people over 18. Female 13*

- *I think on the TV, drinking looks good and you will have a laugh. But it's not like that in real life. Female 13*

- *I think adverts on alcohol should be shown not as much. Female 14*

- *On TV it looks fun and it shows everyone at the pub all the time, it doesn't show the side effects and stuff. Female 14*

- *If shown in a bad way and not casual, it could help awareness.
Female 14*

- *Do not show excessive drinking before 7pm as young children are bound to be watching it, as long as the drinking is either controlled or a bad consequence is shown, it will not encourage young people to drink. Female 15*

- *Shouldn't show people drinking loads. Female 15*

- *Show more reality, maybe 16 year olds drinking, show some consequences of drinking health-wise. Female 16*

- *Show it like it is in real life because too many young teens drink without being responsible. Female 16*

- *You should show people drinking from the age of 16 and stop showing just teenagers being drunk. Female 16*

- *Need to show more adults and the effects drink have on them.
Female 17*

- *Show older people drinking too much- take some of the 'wrong' reputation off young people/teenagers. Female 17*

Drugs - Male

- *It shouldn't be shown on TV because people in real life die from these things.
Male 12*

- *Drugs and alcohol should be taken seriously and stars should try to reach out to younger people and tell them about their own lives. Male 13*

- *I think if the effects are shown then fine it can be used on TV. Male 13*

- *Make sure if shown on TV to show effects of what they do. It's ok to show what they are because it's reality. If you're 14 or over and you don't know what drugs are then you should be told. Male 14*

- *Show the reality and the effects but only in a negative way not positive, and the cost and lifestyle that is mainly lived by these people. Male 14*

- *They should show the effects of drugs and alcohol because if you sniff it you can loose part of your nose and alcohol can damage your kidney and liver. Male 15*

- *These should be shown for educational purposes or to show it negatively so that viewers don't imitate. Male 15*

- *In music videos most contain drugs or alcohol but it's their choice and their video. Male 15*

- *They shouldn't show it on music channels and if they do show it than they should put a moral to it. Male 15*

- *They shouldn't be so graphic with drugs on music channels. Male 16*

- *Show both sides of the story, children can then make up their own mind. Limit drug use around 7pm so little children don't see it. Male 16*

- *Try to balance it out - not too much of the good side of drugs, also show the after effects. Not to glamour drugs but to be realistic about them. Young people need to be empowered at some point, but need to be exposed at the right amount. Male 17*

- *Censorship doesn't work, young people will find out for themselves. Male 17*

Drugs - Female

- *Drugs shouldn't be shown in a good way so viewers believe it's wrong to take drugs. Female 12*

- *When a soap has an episode relating to drugs, I think people under 10 shouldn't watch it, as it's not suitable. Female 12*

- *They need to make sure it has consequences. Female 13*

- *Make it more realistic, have to show the consequences. Female 13*

- *I think they don't really show drugs and the side effects. Female 14*

- *If showing drug taking, make the effects realistic, don't patronise and show the character dying, however don't show them not being affected. Have to get it realistic so young people aren't trying things under false pretences. Female 14*

- *Showing someone who has reasons for taking drugs is ok, showing it for the sake of it, is wrong. Female 14*

- *I think it's wrong showing drugs on telly because it then influences young people. Female 15*

- *If shown in a bad way and not casual, it can help awareness. Female 15*

- *Should be shown a bit later maybe. Female 16*

- *Show more effects of the use of drugs and how dangerous they are. Female 16*

- *Younger adults need to know consequences of drugs. Female 16*
- *Drugs should be shown more on TV, and if shown do it in 'real-life' - not all drug dealers look like Pimps! Female 16*
- *Show drugs in a more realistic way, not all dealers are gangsters. Female 17*
- *Show people taking them, not just dealers, show what cannabis can lead to. Female 17*

Violence - Male

- *Violence should be exposed to 'children' when they are over 16. It helps when they know how fake wrestling is. Male 12*
- *Violence on TV should be shown but after 10 o'clock. Male 13*
- *I would show shows with violence late in the night and send out warnings every couple of minutes saying the age groups and the amount of violence. Male 13*
- *It is part of growing up, so show it. Male 14*
- *Showing blatant realistic violence is not needed, e.g. Jackass should not be shown on telly - as an 18 film it's fine. Male 14*
- *Show the reality to a limit before it can influence people. Male 15*
- *Don't make it so realistic. Male 15*
- *Jackass - ridiculous OTT (over the top) and shouldn't be shown on, very wrong and copied always. Reality - such as crime ok to certain extent but don't go OTT as some is sick. Male 15*
- *I think that violence shouldn't change, it might make TV boring. Male 14*
- *If it's violent and sometimes shouldn't be shown on TV, but you shouldn't try to change it either because a little change might have big impact (too much restrictions make it boring). Male 15*
- *Films about realistic, graphic violence should be reduced. Male 14*
- *I think that violence shouldn't be changed. I think it should be left because you might change more than enough. Male 15*
- *Personal, one on one psychological torture should be left 'till after watershed. Male 16*
- *Don't show as much personal violence. Where many characters are killed in film (Lord of the Rings) the effect is less concentrated, rather than a few people are killed. Make a watershed for any kind of violence. Male 17*

Violence - female

- *They should say more about WWE not being real, I've seen boys copy that and get hurt. Female 12*
- *Children under 10 shouldn't watch violence because some images might stick in their heads. Female 12*

- *Certain programmes which include lots of violence shouldn't be shown before 7pm. Female 13*

- *Shouldn't be shown before the watershed as it could be very disturbing for young kids. Female 13*

- *I think violent films should have warning, more bigger and more often. Female 13*

- *I think they need to look at Playstation, the game rates should be clearer. Female 14*

- *I think people should know about violence because they know what's going on in the world and be careful. Female 14*

- *I think it's ok after a certain time, maybe you need to have warnings like on films. Female 14*

- *The times should be later than normal, sometimes it is over the top. Female 15*

- *No need to show violence for fun, cut some of the things that are gruesome out. Female 15*

- *The magicians' programmes are bad, with knife-throwing and stuff, they need to be watched. Female 16*

- *I think we need to know, it means that I now catch the bus rather than walk, so it's a good thing to see stuff. Female 16*

- *Try not to go overboard in soaps, but people need to see society violence, need to know what's right & wrong. Female 17*

- *Violence needs to be shown because people put up with violence and they shouldn't. Female 17*

Sex and Adult Themes - Male

- *Nothing wrong as long as they show that protection is important. Male 15*

- *Show it but make sure it is not disturbing - no graphic rape or sex with blood and sacrifices. Male 15*

- *This is difficult as it is defined on how mature you are. Male 16*

- *You should use a time restriction on sex and nudity, for example 10 to 11pm. Male 16*

- *It shouldn't be shown in a perverted way to children, but if it's educational then it's fine. Male 16*

- *Sex should not be shown at all on TV - only on video for private use. Male 16*

- *Not many things wrong - just keep a line between sex and violence. Male 16*

- *Porn should not be accessible to anyone under 16. Male 16*

- *Gay and lesbian couples should not be shown before watershed. Male 16*

- *Let the viewer decide what does and doesn't get sent to their TV set. Male16*

- *Hard core sex should be banned whereas nudity shouldn't be banned as long as it's related and not just for the sake of it. Male 17*

- *Less restrictions on talking about it. Too many regulations are stopping people being open, which is important. Male 17*

Sex and Adult Themes - female

- *TV programmes have got it right as it is. You never see much on TV anyway. Female 14*

- *Late night TV needs to have more warnings and later times, Day time TV has sex viewing perfect. Female 14*

- *Show more teen stuff, like getting pregnant at an early age. Female 15*

- *Not sure that they should have freeviews. Female 15*

- *I think it should stay the same, like in the soaps they do it but the door shuts. Female 15*

- *They show too much. I think you should be at least 12 to be watching it but not full sex. Female 15*

- *Not on kids shows but otherwise I think it's ok after a certain time e.g.; 10pm. Female 16*

- *I think the age limit should be 13, I think they've got it right the amount they show. Female 16*

- *It shows awareness and what can happen if you have a one night stand. Female 16*

- *I would tend not to show actual physical sex, more emotion and consequences. Female 16*

- *Show sex in a real way, not pornographic like Channel 4, Five and Footballers Wives. Female 16*

- *Need more teenage pregnancy things shown to young adults, but after 9pm. Female 17*

- *Show it in a more positive way, more realistically, it's not all porn, show people's emotions. Female 17*

- *Show contraception. Female 17*

Paranormal - Male

- *Before they show it on TV they should mention it's not real. Male 13*

- *Decide what paranormal shows should be shown at what time and what is in it as well. Male 13*

- *I think the age for vampire programmes etc. should be from 11 onwards. Male 14*

- *I think they should only show it after 8 o'clock and people over 12 should be allowed to see it. I don't think that they should show things that they don't know for sure. Male 14*

- *I think that it is not ok when people influence other people, saying that they've contacted their dead relatives when really they're just getting these people emotional over nothing. I don't think there should be a restriction but I don't think it should be shown on mainstream channels. Male 15*

- *Could be dangerous if they show instructions on how to contact the dead. Male 15*

- *Paranormal ok around 8/9 o'clock. Keep away from occult and Satan worship. Male 16*

- *Things like Buffy, Angel, Charmed encourage imagination. Male 16*

Paranormal - female

- *It should not be serious so it doesn't change people's beliefs and doesn't affect people. Female 12*

- *If you going to include ghosts and it's serious then the programme should be shown after 7pm. Female 12*

- *Programmes on normal TV (not SKY or Digital) should be funny. Female 13*

- *Children shouldn't watch it because they would believe in it. Female 13*

- *I think it's up to the parents to decide, I don't think it's a big deal. Female 14*

- *I don't really feel that there should be a time set or whatever but I think it should be limited. Female 14*

- *Should be shown not at peak times because kids might be watching. Female 15*

- *I think that there should be a set time after 9 because little children might watch it. Female 15*

- *I think it's up to the parents to decide and I don't think it's a big deal, it should be in the evening. Female 15*

- *I think people could have really bad nightmares, I think programmes should be on at a certain time, like 11pm. Female 16*

- *Not over the top, as it can cause nightmares. Female 16*

- *I don't think there is a problem with paranormal programmes, it is up to the person's imagination. Female 17*

Religion - Male

- *Religion is a serious thing so that TV programmes should be educational and teach children about religion. Male 12*

- *Religion should not be 'advertised' on TV. It could bring frustration and anger towards different religions. Male 13*

- *I think it would be ok to have a programme on religion but not on normal channels, it's not for others to tell you what to believe. Male 14*

- *You should have one channel for it and not show it on other channels because it might be offensive. Male 14*

- *Advertise but don't force anybody to go to that religion. Male 14*

- *Religion is fine to show on TV as long as it's respectful to other religions. Male 15*

- *Diversity, show different faiths but mostly Christian as it is a Christian nation. Male 16*

- *Have a wide range of religions on TV and make sure they don't offend each other. Then it is up to the parents. Male 17*

Religion - female

- *I think it would be forceful. Female 12*

- *I think religion should be everyone, it has to be a choice. Female 13*

- *I think they should have their own channels, then if they want to ask for donations they can. Female 14*

- *It's ok but they mustn't make people feel patronised into believing a religion. Female 14*

- *If there was a channel, there should be a choice… interactive so people can watch what they want. Female 15*

- *I think it's okay, because it's your choice to be religious or not. Female 15*

- *Good idea for religious channels, people who want to watch, can. Female 16*

- *I think that there should be a variety of channels shown on telly, different religions. Female 17*