

December 2008

Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review
Phase Two: Preparing for the digital future
RESPONSE BY STONEWALL

1. Stonewall is the national organisation that has campaigned for equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people across Britain since 1989. We welcome the opportunity to comment briefly on Ofcom's second review of public service broadcasting. Stonewall submitted a response to phase one of the review in June, which should be read in conjunction with this submission.
2. In recent years, Stonewall has published a range of research exploring how gay people and their lives are depicted on television, how lesbian and gay people themselves feel about this reflection and how it shapes heterosexual perceptions of gay lives.
3. For further information on any of the points raised in this response, please contact Jonathan Finney, Senior Parliamentary Officer. Jonathan.Finney@stonewall.org.uk, telephone 020 7593 1850. All Stonewall's research publications are available to download free at www.stonewall.org.uk.
4. Our response to phase one of the review noted that the way in which lesbian and gay people and their lives are depicted on television impacts on the way in which gay people not only see themselves but are viewed by others, making it a uniquely powerful medium.
5. Research undertaken by Stonewall has shown that lesbian, gay and bisexual viewers see a difference in the way that certain public service broadcasters portray gay people. For example, they were twice as likely to think that Channel 4 broadcasts more realistic portrayals of gay people compared to other terrestrial channels.
6. Based on this evidence, we have stated previously that public service broadcast plurality is vital because it could secure not only greater diversity in output but better quality of output that offers lesbian and gay licence payers an improved service.
7. We note the provisional conclusion that 'Channel 4 should have a significant public service role in the digital age, building on its current contribution. It needs an economic model and funding mechanism to support this.'
8. Stonewall research shows that gay people respond positively to the role of broadcasters such as Channel 4 and how they choose to represent gay lives and issues. In short, public service broadcasting ought not to be left exclusively to the BBC if other broadcasters can and do better meet the needs of diverse audiences - particularly when there are still obvious gaps in the BBC's provision of services to the **1.5 million** license-paying households likely to be lesbian, gay or bisexual. (Based on Treasury actuary estimates of the gay population).
9. Stonewall recognises the importance of a publicly owned Channel 4 at the heart of the public service broadcasting system and understands that a new funding settlement is needed to enable Channel 4 to sustain its PSB role, including high quality broadcasting for gay audiences.