



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture,
Media and Sport
4th Floor
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

www.gov.uk/dcms
enquiries@culture.gov.uk

Sharon White
Chief Executive
Ofcom
Riverside House
2A Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA

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Dear Sharon,

Public Service Broadcasting

I am writing to you following Ofcom's recent publications related to a number of areas of Public Service Broadcasting.

As you state, Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) is now at a crucial juncture, facing many new challenges in an increasingly online environment. The market is changing with rapid technological developments; ever growing customer choice; evolving audience habits, particularly for younger audiences; and well-funded global competition. This presents a number of new challenges as well as opportunities for the PSBs.

Public Service Broadcasting provides immense cultural, economic and democratic value to the UK and as our national institutions, they are trusted and valued by UK audiences for their impartial news, and high quality, original, and distinctive programming. The Government is committed to supporting a strong Public Service Broadcasting system as part of a healthy and dynamic wider media market. I therefore warmly welcome your timely recommendations on Public Service Broadcasting prominence, and the emerging thinking set out in your document 'The Future of Public Service Media'. I am writing to you at this stage to share my views on these matters in more detail.

Prominence

The issue of Public Service Broadcasting prominence and extending this to the online environment is a matter of significance for the PSBs and for the sector more widely. The Government has recognised its importance and, consequently, the Digital Economy Act 2017 required Ofcom to review the prominence of the PSBs' linear channels and on-demand services.

I am thankful for all the hard work you and your team have undertaken to review this area. You have produced a thorough report with some significant recommendations, and the Government will consider them carefully. I note that you will now begin a period of engagement with the sector and others to help develop these recommendations and understand their implications, and that this will take time. I appreciate Ofcom's commitment to exploring these complex issues fully, and my officials will work with your team in this undertaking.

I have long said that if Ofcom makes recommendations for legislative change the Government will look at bringing them forward. I believe that your recommendations are a vital step in ensuring this crucial area of regulation works well for the sector and for audiences in the changing media landscape.

Ofcom's Public Service Broadcasting Review

I was also pleased to note your plans to look at more fundamental questions around the future of Public Service Broadcasting - indeed the future of Public Service Media - and your commitment to help drive forward discussion of these issues through the 'Small Screen: Big Debate' nationwide forum.

As you will know, my officials have been considering these matters for some time and have engaged with your team over recent months. I welcome the openness with which your team has approached these discussions, and the Government and Ofcom must work together on these matters.

Ofcom, as the independent regulator, has an important role to play here in strengthening our understanding of how Public Service Broadcasting is performing and how it can adapt to ensure its ongoing resilience. I understand that, following the publication of your assessment of the state of Public Service Broadcasting towards the end of this year, you will set out more detail about your Review. As you give consideration to shaping this work, I would encourage you to be ambitious and innovative in your approach, and to explore the issues and options that you believe to be relevant.

In your recommendations to the Government on prominence you set out the importance of balancing PSB benefits and obligations and the potential need for new obligations to ensure the continued availability of PSB on-demand content. More broadly in your PSB Review, we would welcome Ofcom's views on whether the balance between benefits and obligations remains appropriate, including in the relationship between the PSBs and platform providers. Finding the right solutions will require a bold approach and thorough debate. Given the scale of the challenges facing the sector, I would also encourage you to move as promptly as possible in taking this work forward and I would be grateful if you could keep me updated on the progress of this work.

Finally, I am grateful to the work you have undertaken on children's content, delivering on the obligations placed on you by the Digital Economy Act 2017. The Government is committed to supporting new creative and distinctive content that represents UK children. I would welcome further updates in due course as you monitor the PSBs' delivery of their encouraging new plans in this area. The pragmatic approach taken here, both in the construction of the legislation and in how Ofcom has carried out its obligations, provides a good example of how regulation must adapt with the changing media market.

Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

Thank you again for all the work Ofcom have done to date, and I look forward to our two teams continuing to maintain a close working relationship as we look to ensure a sustainable future for our Public Service Broadcasting system.

Yours ever

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Wright', with a large loop on the left and a smaller loop on the right.

Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport