

Question	Your response
<p>Question 1: Do you have any comments on Ofcom's proposed Work Plan for 2026/27?</p>	<p><i>Not Confidential</i></p> <p>I attended the London plan of work meeting, and was interested to hear the concerns raised by Ofcom staff and attendees about online harms. This formed an impression of a social media sector taking a lead, and governments, regulators and citizens having to catch up and mitigate harms. I suggest a different approach is needed: the increase of beneficial, beautiful and fair media to support transition from harmful to healing media, from divisive to inclusive, from opaque systems of ownership and control to transparent ones. In the UK the Community Radio licence was introduced around 2004, at a time when social media was also starting to have an influence. The long arguments for the need for community media, around citizen's rights to have a voice, have freedom of expression, contribute to democracy and have opportunities for creative expression, became trickier to argue for in the context of the launch of youtube and other platforms that appeared to be offering something similar. However, over the last 20 years, the differences have become more apparent. Social media has a tendency to be screen based, individualistic, unregulated and impulsive for its users. Community media is often voice based, collaborative, regulated and considered. The protections afforded by the Community Radio Order, limiting licences to local non-profits with demonstrable accountability to their communities, and the restrictions of the broadcast code, have resulted in a community radio scene in the UK that is largely free from the harms seen in social media.</p> <p>The interesting problems that come with spectrum allocation have effectively enabled certain media forms to be used for social benefit, whilst others with apparent infinite potential for new platforms and content have minimal quality control and cause real-world serious harm to many of their users.</p> <p>With the reduction in old, simplistic media certainties, and the prioritisation of "choice" the question of who or what to trust has become difficult for audiences. In my experience, trust is gained through hands-on</p>

Question	Your response
	<p>engagement. Having access to media spaces—not just apps and websites, but physical spaces for collaborative production—enables a fundamental shift in perceptions of what media are, and how they are produced. Without this, “the media” is often referred to as a homogenous thing outside of citizen control.</p> <p>If the UK is to follow the Australian example and restrict social media for under 16s, this would present an opportunity for a reset. At my work at Soundart Radio and Skylark, we have been arguing for years that children should experience community media from a young age as an inoculation against social media. They deserve access to fair and accountable platforms, and to have a voice, be creative and be heard. Far from seeing radio as irrelevant and in the past, children in our community are enthusiastic and engaged. They learn about radio waves, how to solder, carry out interviews, make their own music, plan radio shows and operate the studio. Many come back throughout their lives, or go on to university to study related subjects.</p> <p>This has provided us with a body of evidence that says there are real alternatives, that not only avoid the harms of social media but actively encourage increased creativity, care and citizenship. If their access to social media is reduced, access to community media (including print, TV and radio) needs to be increased. This creates media-literate habits for life, and improves community cohesion and skills.</p> <p>If the work of regulators is overwhelmed by following up online harms, then where is the capacity to build the media we really need and imagine? I argue that this work is being done on the ground and that given enough opportunity to thrive we can move towards reduced dominance by harmful, unaccountable media. In order for this to happen the following need to be prioritised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Continued access to both FM and AM for Community Radio. Following the serious internet outages in Spain and Portugal in 2025, there has been increased interest in keeping access to

Question	Your response
	<p>analogue platforms. And far from obsolete and irrelevant, analogue radio is still being reinvented by artists who are finding new and forgotten ways to explore its potential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Reassessment of the success of SSDAB and continued opportunities for community based non-profits to run multiplexes.● Research commissioned into how to create child-led community media to realistically replace their need for social media.● A review of local TV, which could have been introduced in a manner more similar to community radio. A new opportunity for communities to access TV licensing for arts and social projects could be particularly beneficial.

Please complete this form in full and return to planofwork@ofcom.org.uk