

Your response

Question	Your response
<p>Question 1: Do you agree with Ofcom's provisional assessment and the proposal to reduce the original productions quota (condition 2.32) on CBBC from 72% of all hours to 66% for each of the calendar years 2022 and 2023, and 68% for calendar year 2024 and for each subsequent calendar year? If not, please explain why, providing appropriate supporting evidence where possible.</p>	<p><i>Is this response confidential? – N</i></p> <p>As there is a reduction in the numbers watching children's channels, it is essential that content publishers adapt and meet the challenge ahead. The fact that CBBC now reaches 14% of its target audience on television each week compared to 27% in 2015 is evidence of the seriousness of the challenge and the need to respond quickly to the decline in viewing numbers.</p> <p>CBBC must build better relationships with the audience by strengthening the channel's appeal. As part of its plans to do this, it is seeking to invest in more UK animations and is planning a small increase in acquisitions.</p> <p>We have concerns about the BBC's future acquisition of animated series made outside the UK. While the BBC's proposal is structured in terms of this being a short-term measure, Ofcom needs to monitor this extremely closely and ensure that the BBC does not move to make this permanent.</p> <p>When it comes to animated series, the BBC should be commissioning original animations from the existing strong base of UK companies rather than acquiring existing series. Any changes should not be at the expense of original and indigenous content for the UK, whether animated series or live action.</p> <p>We also note that this proposal follows on from last year's reduction in original broadcast hours of children's news service 'Newsround'. This was done without seeking to consult with young audiences or look strategically at the long-term impact of that programme, as noted by Carter et al in a paper published last year.</p> <p>They stated that the Newsround reduction was a consequence of Ofcom having revised downward the BBC's obligations in this area which "represents a lowering of expectations by Ofcom, which has consistently conceded on public service obligations to children, particularly by the UK's commercially funded public service broadcasters"¹.</p>

¹ [Carter, C; Steemers, J; and Messenger Davies, M. Why Children's News matters The case of CBBC Newsround in the UK.](#)

When this is considered alongside statements made by Ofcom regarding the BBC being given more freedom to set its own quotas², TAC has a concern that there is a general direction of travel in terms of relaxing regulation of the BBC at a time when it should be ensuring it is more distinctive than ever, given the increasing range of other media content and platforms available.

CBBC's current commitment of 72% original productions is already lower than BBC One, BBC Two and BBC Four, all of which have a 75% obligation regarding original productions³.

The CBBC proposal also needs to be seen within the context of the present lack of any new funding of the Young Audiences Content Fund, which is a disappointing development in terms of its impact on the children's production sector in Wales and the rest of the UK.

It is not clear the extent to which the CBBC plans are part of an overall coherent strategy on the part of the BBC or an isolated effort to reduce programme costs.

We note in its consultation paper Ofcom states: "it is important that the BBC provides transparency on its wider plans and the supporting changes it is making to CBBC in its Annual Plan and that it reports publicly on how it has achieved what it had set out to do."

We would ask whether Ofcom should require that the BBC undertakes this exercise prior to any decision being taken to reduce originated hours on CBBC.

Overall we question the wisdom of approving this move ahead of Ofcom's full review of the BBC's Operating Licence, due to commence shortly. We feel any reduction in CBBC's hours should be considered within the overall framework of the Operating Licence, which we hope will take a full strategic view of the BBC's obligations and the needs of its Licence-Fee paying audiences, as well as its Charter obligation to support the creative industries across the UK.

² [Goldbart, M. BBC to get to set its own quotas. Broadcast, 23 Feb 2021](#)

³ [BBC Operating Licence. Ofcom, 2017, p15](#)