

Scottish Broadcasting Commission: A children's consultation

Initial summary report



1. Introduction

This is an **initial** summary report to The Scottish Broadcasting Commission, reporting on **headline findings** from the consultation with children undertaken by The Children's Parliament.

The children were aged between 9 and 12 years old. Children in Kirkcaldy, Edinburgh and Stirling participated. They undertook some preparatory tasks about the television they watched and they took part in a workshop. They then used questionnaires to consult with other children.

Some of the children will represent their groups when they **visit and meet with the Scottish Broadcast Commission Commissioners** in Glasgow on Thursday 26th June. A **full report** will be presented then, along with the results of the children's questionnaire based research.

In this report we highlight findings in relation to:

- Children talked a lot about the TV they watch
- The big statements game
- Watching telly together
- Seeing Scotland on TV
- Seeing yourself on TV
- What's the value or importance about certain types of TV programme?
- Creating a new channel for Scotland
- The children's questionnaire

2. Children talked a lot about the TV they watch

A pre workshop task was to record some things about the TV the children had been watching in the previous week. This is a glimpse of what they said:

- The children talked a lot about comedy on TV, a lot of it cartoon based or from Disney and from the US – *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy* being the most popular. Other US comedies like *Friends* were popular, particularly for girls. As were series such as *Hannah Montana*.
- Saturday night TV, with a mix of talent shows – *Britain's Got Talent*, *I'd do Anything* – were very popular. Children liked to vote.
- The children like quiz shows.
- Children watch a range of programming, this is already guided by personal interest, so children with an interest in Sports watch a lot of sport on TV; children who love movies watch a lot of movies. Underpinning this choice is the huge selection available to children with multiple cable/satellite/digital channels available.
- Children commented on the amount of Children's TV which is not made in the UK – they watch a lot of US (often Disney Channel) and Australian Children's TV.
- Although many children watch Soaps, it was mostly girls who talked about them. The view was that they were a realistic representation of life, but slightly over the top. Cliff-hanger endings made them exciting.
- The majority of children report having TVs in their bedrooms.

3. The big statements game

To get us going the children took positions on a number of bold statements about TV. This is a glimpse of what they said:

<i>All children like the same programmes</i>	Whilst about half the children thought that overall most children their age liked similar stuff, this was probably due to their not being enough on TV for them. As one child said: <i>“There isn’t enough choice for 8 to 13 year olds so we end up watching the same stuff”</i> . For the other half of the groups the view was that children don’t like the same stuff, typically one contributor said: <i>“People watch what they’re interested in. people have their own opinions, we don’t all have the same taste”</i> .
<i>Children watch too much TV</i>	Views differed across the Groups; but again children were split fairly evenly on this. For those that agreed there was a view that <i>“It’s addictive; but not as addictive as the Computer”</i> and <i>“It’s because we don’t have anything else to do”</i> . Parents also got the blame for too much watching TV: <i>“Your parents are watching it so you have to”</i> .
<i>We need more channels on TV</i>	Most children thought yes, but about a quarter thought no. Some children thought if you have multiple channels to choose from you probably had enough; although the quality needn’t necessary be good. Other children were strong in their views: <i>“There’s enough people watch too much TV. WE should be out playing, getting fit”</i> .
<i>Children don’t watch the news</i>	Only a small number of children agreed. This was because <i>“It’s boring”</i> . Most children were somewhere in the middle on this one. Watching the news <i>“Depends on if it has things you want to hear about, like what’s happening to your football team”</i> ; <i>“Sometimes there’s something interesting on like about Madeleine or the earthquake in China”</i> . Others liked the news when it was <i>“Local and interesting”</i> . About 1 in 3 children disagreed with the statement. They said children do watch the news, and like Newsround because it’s for them. Children who watched the news didn’t like the political reports but liked more human stories, including about murders and kidnapping. Some children just have to watch the news because their parents are watching.
<i>Children should decide what TV they watch</i>	About half the children agreed. They said things like: <i>“I decide what I watch”</i> and <i>“If you don’t want to watch what adults are watching you should get to choose”</i> . The other half was unsure or disagreed. However almost all children agreed that adults have an important role in advising children. Even when they wanted to retain some control over what they watch they said things like: <i>“Some people might decide to watch bad tings or things for over 18s so that wouldn’t be right.”</i> and <i>“There’s things you shouldn’t be watching. It’s whoever is looking after you who should decide”</i> and <i>“It’s up to adults to say ‘you can’t watch it, it’ll be scary”</i> .

Children should never watch TV after 9pm

Almost all children have some nights, including during the week, when they watch TV after 9pm so very few children agreed. A handful thought that children shouldn't watch TV too late because they get tired; especially children younger than our contributors. But almost all children disagreed.. They said many of the programmes they liked and watched, including programmes they thought were for children, were shown after 9pm. *"The good ones come on after 9pm, like the best comedy"*.

You never learn anything from TV

Most children disagreed. They thought you can learn something from most programmes. They said things like: *"You can learn things form Eastenders, like about things like drugs"*. *"There's loads of nature programmes you can learn from"*. There was some recognition of what learning might be possible from different sources: *"There are things that are just stupid entertainment but there is other stuff you can learn from"* *"You can learn form the News but maybe not from the Disney Channel"*.

4. Watching telly together

"You can have a laugh and a discussion".

"It's a chance to be together".

"If your Dad works watching something together is a chance to sit down together".

"I don't see my big brother much but I go to his house and we watch football together".

The children talked about what programmes they watched with other people, with whom, and why. They said that watching TV with friends and family was a good way to have conversations; that issues on programmes were talked about. Families often eat and watch TV together.

Saturday night TV programmes and Soaps were programmes most watched with family. As were comedies because it was good to have a laugh together. Parents who didn't speak English as a first language asked their children to explain things on TV.

However, children also watched a lot of TV on their own. Children liked the choice this gave them of what to view. TV was also something to do when you were on your own because a parent was working or studying or busy doing something with other children in the family.

5. Seeing Scotland on TV

A pre workshop task was to record what the children had seen on TV in the previous week which had been about Scotland – it's people, nature, business, sport, history – anything at all.

Very few children reported from their TV viewing seeing anything about Scotland; and where they did it was about specific sports event – Rangers had just played a major European game and there had been trouble amongst fans – or it presented stereotypes of things Scottish, or it presented Scotland as comedy. Children also reported seeing occasional things about Scotland in factual/documentary programmes; for example something about life in Scotland during the war.

Comedy programmes like *Still Game* and *Chewin' the Fat* were popular, on TV and on DVDs. Sometimes episodes of programmes like *Britain's Got Talent* were filmed in Scotland or programmes like *Master Chef* had Scottish contestants. The children liked it when they could support Scottish contestants on things like *X Factor*. Some children watch *River City*.

Some children watched Scottish news broadcasts but thought that it was all pretty negative stuff; including negative representations of children and young people as playing truant, getting stabbed. One child said *"If people not from Scotland were watching the news they would think it was terrible and scary if they watch the News"*. In one small group children agreed with another child when they said: *They say this is what's happened this week but they mean in England"*.

One child had seen a re-run of *Braveheart* on a movie channel. One child thought that on Children's TV when Scotland or Scottish people were represented: *"People take the mickey out of Scotland, they think we all have ginger hair and big tartan hats"*.

One child reported the following references to 'Scotland' in the previous week:

- There was a character on *My Parents are Aliens* who wore a kilt.
- On *The Site Life of Zach and Cody* someone came back from a holiday in Scotland and had a tartan skirt on.
- In *the Simpsons* Willie was playing the bagpipes.
- In *Friends* at the wedding Ross played the bagpipes.

Thinking about the task had made several children realise how much TV was from the US. In general children wanted to see more about Scotland and Scotland's people on TV that wasn't about stereotypes.

6. Seeing yourself on TV

Children talked about two questions: Are there any programmes or characters on TV that show life like your life is? If there could be, what would you like to see more of when it comes to children and families on TV?

These were difficult questions for many of the children to grasp. For those who did, most children commented *"There are no programmes that are like my life"*.

Some children identified people on TV that resemble them because of physical attributes: *"The ginger boy on Coronation Street"*. Others because they behave (often badly) like they do: *"I'm like Nelson on the Simpsons because I throw eggs at people's windows"*.

There was a view that TV *"only shows the negative side of things or if they show people in other countries it's not normal life, it's glamorous or people have died"*.

A few children recognised families or family situations which were like theirs.

One said: *"Zack and Cody because I have a little brother and my Mum and Dad are split up"*.

One girl recorded: *"Eastenders like Lauren because her life sort of relates to mine"* and from another: *"People in Eastenders live with their Mum and Step Dad"*.

One girl recorded: *"Yes there is families like mine. On CBBC it's a programme about a family and I'm like the girl in it. They do similar things. Their Dad stays with someone else and my Dad stays somewhere else. Their Mum lives with her boyfriend. Makes me feel sad. They don't cry about their Dad but I do cry"*.

Children were then asked to think about what they would like to see when it comes to representations of children and families. The following comments are representative of what they said. They would like to see more of children and families who:

- Get along.
- Spend time together.
- Have problems like families have but sort them; not just splitting up and having tragic stories.
- Stick together and have their own social lives and all love each other.
- Do the kinds of interesting things they do – like burying time capsules or go on holiday together.
- Are in comedies about family life.
- Are in quiz shows together, like parents versus kids.
- Have come to live in Scotland from Poland.
- Would like to do a kid or pet swap.
- Are about things like autism.
- Who are Scottish and go through real life situations. Who are special in their own way
- Who are Scottish and funny but show a lot of Scottish features. Also that they talk about stuff going on at that time.

7. What's the value or importance about certain types of TV programme?

The children worked in small groups, taking responsibility for considering the value and importance of programmes which might fall into certain categories, such as: *soaps/drama; comedy; sports; news; children's TV; documentaries/factual*. They were tasked with making the case for such programmes. This is a summary of some of their contributions.

Comedy

The children made the case for this kind of programming by identifying that:

- People don't always agree what's funny.
- But this is the most entertaining kind of programme
- When it's good you want to watch it again!
- It helps you relax.
- It's really just comedy that's worth watching on telly

Soaps/drama

The children made the case for this kind of programming by identifying that:

- They are something to look forward to every day.
- The characters are interesting and they are like everyday people.

Sports

The children made the case for this kind of programming by identifying that:

- It's entertaining when you get involved in shouting on your team.
- They might encourage you to get fit and healthy if you join in.

News

The children made the case for this kind of programming by identifying that:

- The News keeps you up to date with what's going on in the world – especially if there is some danger you should know about.
- You might not want to know it but you need the News.
- It's best when it includes sports news too.

Children's TV

The children made the case for this kind of programming by identifying that:

- It entertains you and it helps you learn, especially about things from around the world.
- There's a big mix of kind of programme – comedy, adventure.

Documentaries/factual The children made the case for this kind of programming by identifying that:

- People need to learn; these programmes describe things and give us information.
- They help describe what life was like in the past and what it will be like in the future.
- People love documentaries and having more on TV would put viewing figures up.
- You get good advice on diet and health.
- Adverts make you buy things that are unhealthy; factual programmes tell you the truth.
- Schools can use these programmes in education.
- They teach us about how the outside world is being affected by pollution.

8. Creating a new channel for Scotland

Children worked in small groups to pull together their ideas for a new channel for Scotland. These are just two of the *pen pictures* children painted. Our full final report will highlight more and identify key features:

Our channel idea: There wouldn't be adverts – or if there were, only once an hour. There would be news from Scotland, and history stuff in the afternoon for adults. You would be able to vote on what you liked and didn't like about what had been on. There wouldn't be too many repeats. There should be a choice of what to watch and when, like a menu you could choose from. But some stuff would be fixed, like your favourite comedy or Scotland playing football. In fact there would be lots of comedy and football as well as other sports. At weekends there would be a big family movie. Children's programmes would be shown later than just after school so you can see them in the evening too. There would be live concerts from Scotland.

Our channel idea: The channel would have like themes or sections and you could chose to watch what you wanted when you wanted to watch. The themes would be: *ArtScotland* (about what artists there are in Scotland and helping children with art), *ActScotland* (about drama programmes) *FamilyScotland* (stuff about Scottish families) *RockScotland* (where you could see concerts and Scottish music) *SportsScotland* (It's always English football on telly and so you could see more Scottish football and other Scottish sports) *SaturdayNightScotland* ((Scotland's got talent!). There would be some good programmes like we already know from Disney too.

9. The children's questionnaire

When children meet with Commissioners on the 26th June they will share the results of their questionnaire. They have asked other children these questions:

1. What's your favourite TV programme?
2. What TV channels do you watch most? Tell us the top 3:
3. How much do you watch any of this on TV? *News- Sports-Comedy-Soaps/Drama-Factual/Documentary-Movies-Children's TV* Options on a grid:
Every day/Some days in the week/Every now and then/Never
4. Would you like to see more about Scotland and Scotland's people on TV?
Yes/No
5. Would you like to see more about children's lives on TV? Yes/No
6. Would you like to see more about your community, where you live, on TV?
Yes/No
7. Would you like to have a children's news programme made in Scotland for Scotland's children? Yes/No
8. If there was a new TV channel for people living in Scotland what kind of programmes would you want to watch? *News- Sports-Comedy-Soaps/Drama-Factual/Documentary-Movies-Children's TV*
9. Would you like to have a programme (made in Scotland for Scotland's children) where children can debate and discuss issues that are important to them? (It could be about things like bullying, having things to do, your rights, what schools are like). Yes/No
10. Are you interested in watching live football matches on TV involving the national Scotland team? Yes/No

About the Children's Parliament

The Children's Parliament is a Scottish Government funded initiative which promotes opportunities for children aged 8 to 14 to have experiences of active citizenship and participation. The Children's Parliament introduces children to a world of ideas, creating opportunities for thinking and criticism. We work in the community, in schools and with families.



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