



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

A new future for broadcasting and communications in Wales: children's media in 2023

An assessment of how the recommendations affect children's media.

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Introduction

The Expert Panel wanted to ensure that their report is based on the needs of future generations and felt that children's programming is an area that warrants further investigation for inclusion in their report. The Expert Panel sought advice from a wider group of individuals to help provide specialised input as part of their evidence gathering stage. The key questions they want to explore are: 'is there a need for a more defined public service for children in broadcasting in Wales?' and if it is needed 'how would it be regulated?'

Kids Industries has been asked to devise and present an expert, validated opinion focused on how the future of children's media is developing and where there may be need for regulatory support. Much of the data points that are included in this report are taken from KI's Global Family Study. This study garnered the responses of 20,147 individuals in 10 countries. The UK was proportionately represented. Various other sources are cited throughout the document. This summary provides a synthesis of Kids Industries' collective knowledge and desk research focussed on children's media use.

Indigenous attitudes and content

Identifiable differences in Wales in terms of children's media consumption

The [Ofcom Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report \(2022\)](#) identifies some differences in relation to Welsh parental attitudes towards their children's media consumption relative to the rest of the UK. Parents in Wales seem to be more concerned about certain aspects of their children's media consumption than parents in other UK nations, for example, children giving out

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personal details to people online or seeing age-inappropriate content online or on TV. Welsh parents were more likely to be very concerned about:

- their child giving their personal details to inappropriate people
- their child being bullied online
- their child damaging their reputation now or in the future
- their child seeing any type of content which is not appropriate for their age (in terms of violence, bad language, disturbing content, and so on)
- their child seeing content which encourages them to hurt or harm themselves
- their child being influenced by extreme views online
- and the pressure on their child to spend money online

In relation to gaming specifically, parents in Wales were more likely than other nations to be concerned about:

- the possibility of their child talking to strangers while gaming
- the possibility of their child being bullied by other players
- the content of the games their child plays
- the pressure on their child to make in-game purchases

Parents in Wales were also more concerned about who their child is in contact with when they use their phone as well as the potential of them being bullied via their mobile phones.

Children in Wales were also more likely than the UK average to feel pressure to be popular on social media.

Considerations in terms of the future of kids' content consumption

Below are some of the evolving trends Kids Industries think will be pertinent over

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the short to medium term in impacting children's content consumption:

- Content consolidation: the sheer volume of content available today with the proliferation of streaming services is contributing to overload for audiences. There is evidence to suggest that audiences feel overwhelmed and there may be a push towards the consolidation of subscription video on demand services.
- Resistance to a race to the bottom: social media platforms that are focussed on ever shorter form content are likely contributing to shortening attention spans amongst children, as the platforms' designs shape content expectations. High stimulation videos on TikTok, featuring split screens, with multiple different content windows, are proliferating. These videos have been termed 'sludge content' and potentially have adverse effects on children. There is likely to be a continued parental backlash against the sorts of low-value content kids are able to access online and the platforms they are served on ([Sludge content is consuming TikTok. Why aren't we talking about it? | CBC News](#)).
- Immersive entertainment experiences: platforms like Roblox in which children inhabit online worlds are examples of the nascent Metaverse. These immersive digital experiences are deeply popular with children and are likely to redefine entertainment in the future. Brands such as Nickelodeon are increasingly creating entertainment worlds on Roblox - marking a radical departure from passive video consumption, towards far more interactive and collaborative experiences ([Understanding Kids in the Metaverse | CMC 2022 | Sessions | The Children's Media Conference \(CMC\) \(thechildrensmediaconference.com\)](#)).
- New devices and new realities: the Kids Industries Global Family survey showed that there is a rise in smart tech use amongst kids. Conceivably this may have an impact on how entertainment brands tell stories to children with greater potential for more tailored, personalised content experiences and greater interactivity.

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Celebrating indigenous languages through content

There are a number of countries which have invested money into the protection of indigenous languages through the provision of children's content:

- Ireland: TG4 is a public broadcaster that provides programming in Irish, including children's television shows. The broadcaster has received funding from the Irish government to produce original programming in the Irish language. Most recently it announced the launch of a dedicated children's channel: Cúla4 for TG4 ([TG4 | A new children's channel for TG4 approved by Minister Catherine Martin | 2022 | Press Releases | Press | Irish Television Channel, Súil Eile](#)).
- Canada: The Canadian government has established the Indigenous Screen Office, which provides funding and support for the creation and production of Indigenous-language content, including children's television shows ([Indigenous Screen Office funding programs - Canada.ca](#)).
- Mexico: The National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI) provides support for the creation of educational materials and media content in Indigenous languages, including children's television shows ([National Institute for Indigenous Languages \(INALI\) \(mexicoescultura.com\)](#)).
- New Zealand: The Maori Television Service is a government-funded broadcaster that produces and airs a range of programming in the Maori language, including children's television shows ([Our Shows | Māori Television \(maoritelevision.com\)](#)).
- Australia: The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) has produced children's television shows in Indigenous languages, including Little J & Big Cuz, a show produced in English and Indigenous languages ([Little J And Big Cuz : ABC iview](#)).

Content focussed on the preservation of indigenous languages and culture,

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appears to be quite niche, garnering a small audience. Examples include:

- Pukana (1999 - ongoing) - New Zealand show which takes contemporary kids' culture cues, and features game shows, send-ups, talent quests and music. It emphasises 'street' rather than marae-style language. It has won three awards for best show in its category, and two nominations for children's programmes ([Pūkana | Series | Television | NZ On Screen](#)).
- Wapos Bay (2005 -2012) - Canadian stop motion animated family drama comedy television series. Aired across Canada by the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (as part of APTN Kids) and in the United States on the First Nations Experience Network (FNX). It was aired in the languages of Cree, English, French and Inuktitut.

There is clearly scope for smaller countries to punch above their weight when it comes to content production but there is generally a necessity to dub content in order to distribute it globally. The Icelandic children's television programme Lazy Town, for example, known as Latibær in Icelandic, was nominated for the International Emmy Kids Awards in the 'Kids: Preschool' category. The educational television series was created by former gymnast champion and fitness aficionado Magnús Scheving. The show was aired in over 170 countries and dubbed into more than twenty languages ([Icelandic children's programme nominated for an Emmy award | Icelandmag](#)).

The role of regulation

Ofcom regulates the TV and radio sectors, fixed line telecoms, mobiles, postal services, plus the airwaves over which wireless devices operate. The regulator has a duty to protect children from harmful or inappropriate materials on TV, radio and video-on-demand services ([Protecting children: Ofcom](#)).

Ofcom's Broadcasting Code governs what can be aired on TV and radio.

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There's a whole section of the Broadcasting Code dedicated to protecting children from unsuitable content on TV and radio, including rules about the 9pm watershed on TV.

As mentioned above, the development of online platforms and content has far outstripped regulation. In 2020 Ofcom's remit was expanded to include the regulation of harmful online content. It is only recently that Ofcom has set out its 27 plans to implement new online safety rules. The roadmap is available here: [Online Safety Bill: Ofcom's roadmap to regulation](#).

It is the view of Kids Industries that any regulator or shadow regulator should focus on online platforms such as video sharing platforms, gaming platforms and social media, given their potential to cause demonstrable harm to children.

Final words

Having worked in the children's media space for 25 years we have been witness to an almost unbelievable rate of change and evolution. It is clear to us that the existing regulatory bodies and the regulatory powers that they hold are not fit for purpose. The institutions whose role it is to protect our children and guide the content creators are failing to keep pace with the rate of change and are, in fact, and undeniably at least two years behind where the children actually are. There is no satisfactory way of protecting children from the potential harms of Roblox - children can find disturbing content a few short clicks from their favourite games and they can be on the receiving end of grooming and bullying at almost every turn. There is no protection. The opportunity to lead the world in the regulation of children's media is yours. The need is to prepare your regulatory body for what is to come in children's media not, as is the sorry case for the UK as a whole, where it has been. This is a significant challenge but we can see where things are going and so surely, with focus and determination a body can be created that will enable and empower the digitally native Welsh children of today and tomorrow to flourish as a result of their digital experiences.

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