What Do Children Want from the BBC?

Children's Content and Participatory Environments in an Age of Citizen Media

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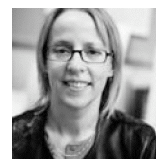
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foreword

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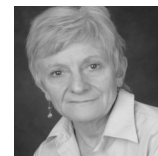**Roy Milani**
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As a BBC partner in this collaboration between AHRC and the BBC, I was very keen to see how academic research would help to inform us as programme makers and content producers. I was particularly interested to see how this approach would allow us to understand our child news audiences in ways that traditional audience research might not. I have to say I was not disappointed. In adopting innovative research methods alongside traditional techniques, and by using an academic, analytical approach to the resulting data, some very interesting findings emerged. Some of them confirmed what had already been understood from previous audience research undertaken by the BBC, but there were critical areas where important new insights into to children's attitudes and behaviours emerged.

Some of the areas which were of particular interest to me and which are highlighted in the project report are:

■ the relationship between linear TV and web usage;

■ the importance of news from all UK nations in children's news provision;

■ how targeting age groups is critical and how some are underserved;

■ the desire of the child news audience to contribute in tangible ways to output and content.

Having completed the research and come up with findings, some of which I believe may be counter intuitive to programme makers and content producers, I look forward to getting producers and academics together to brainstorm and workshop ideas on ways of reaching our child news audiences even more effectively in the future.

Roy Milani
Former Editor, *Newsround*

Contents

This *project* offers preliminary insights into WHAT *children* WANT *from the* BBC's *NEWS PROVISION*

1. Executive summary

This report is the culmination of twelve months of collaborative research between four academic researchers in four universities (Bournemouth, Cardiff, Ulster and Nottingham) and two project partners at the BBC, Roy Milani, former Editor of Newsround *and Louise Wass, former Commissioning Editor of BBC Jam. It represents one of the most sustained pieces of collaborative academic-producer based research on children's relationship to the news, with a particular focus on the BBC's flagship news programme,* Newsround.

This innovative pilot project employed three different methodologies:

■ Video diaries of over 200 children between the ages of 8 and 15 in Bournemouth, Cardiff, Glasgow and Coleraine

■ Over 200 questionnaires detailing children's news consumption habits about the place and importance of news in their lives, and the extent and nature of *Newsround*'s interactive relationship with its audiences

■ Classroom based activities offering children the opportunity to comment on the *Newsround* television bulletin, website and to offer a pitch for a story on either platform

The research was made possible due to the co-operation of our contact schools and to the open and generous access we were granted to interview BBC personnel involved in factual programming for children at all levels within the Corporation. These interviews were an important opportunity for the research team to ensure that both academic and BBC interests were addressed. The field research with children took place in four geographical areas of the UK: England (Bournemouth); Wales (Cardiff); Scotland (Glasgow), and Northern Ireland (Coleraine – Portrush and Portstewart).

The data generated through this research offers a preliminary glimpse of a wide-ranging picture of what children want from the BBC in terms of news provision; the place and importance of news in their lives (particularly in terms of their development as citizens); children's preferred news formats; the levels and nature of their interactivity with *Newsround*; and the importance of issues such as national identities, cultural diversity and age appropriate news.

ASKING CHILDREN what **they** want to *improve* CHILDREN'S news

2. Introduction

The current challenge for BBC children's news content producers is to find new and innovative ways of communicating with children in order to be more responsive to their news interests and needs. Whilst producers of the BBC's flagship children's news programme, *Newsround,* already work hard to encourage children's development as citizens, new forms of interactivity offer exciting opportunities to extend and strengthen this commitment.

The project sought to determine how children relate to the BBC's news provision, both on television and on the web. We spoke to over 200 children between the ages of 8 and 15 in the four nations of the UK to find out what issues most concern them with relation to the provision of news for children. Care was taken to attend to the children's age groups, geographical background, and issues related to gender, ethnicity and class.

The research provides strong evidence that most children see themselves as citizens even though they are not yet of the age where they have full citizenship rights, and consider themselves to be keenly interested in issues relevant to the world around them. While many of our participants, particularly those in *Newsround*'s target audience (8-12 year olds), told us that *Newsround* generally does a good job reporting the news, they also had a number of ideas to make the bulletin and website more responsive and engaging. For example, some children indicated that *Newsround* should try to develop a wider variety of opportunities for interactive dialogue to seek their views and ideas. This enhanced relationship, many felt, would help to support and extend children's sustained involvement with *Newsround* and with the news more generally.

The preliminary findings of this pilot research project provide news producers with the in-depth insights children have offered to us on how to improve the existing news provision for younger and older children. The report includes significant findings around children's use of new digital technologies, the importance of increasing the amount of news from the different nations offered, and ways to enhance the BBC's forms of interactivity and civic engagement with young audiences.

…most children see themselves as CITIZENS and *consider themselves to be keenly interested* in issues relevant to the world around them…

3. Methodology

This project consisted of three different methodologies: Questionnaires; Classroom Based Activities and Video Diaries.

The Fieldwork

Two researchers visited each of the four selected primary schools and five secondary schools of all four nations in the UK, spending an average of one hour with each group of about 12 children. Typically, three primary year groups were visited during the morning and three secondary year groups in the afternoon on the same day. Research in the schools breaks down as follows:

◆◆Primary Schools
■ *St Marks Primary (Bournemouth)*
■ *Radnor Road Primary (Cardiff)*
■ *Hillhead Primary (Glasgow)*
■ *Mill Strand Primary (Portrush)*

◆◆Secondary Schools
■ *Bournemouth School for Boys*
■ *Bournemouth School for Girls*
■ *Llanishen High School (Cardiff)*
■ *Hillhead High School (Glasgow)*
■ *Dominican College (Portstewart)*

Schools were chosen using a convenience sample – two of the researchers already had relationships established with three of the schools in the study, and another researcher had connections to a local primary school through a colleague. Securing secondary schools proved to be especially challenging in one location, and was eventually obtained only with the help of the Head at the primary school, who had already agreed to take part. The status of the BBC as a public service broadcaster helped to secure the involvement of children at all of the schools.

A pre-pilot study was conducted in January 2008 at Radnor Road Primary School and Llanishen High School, both in Cardiff, with groups of approximately 12 children in Years 4, 5 and 6 at Radnor Road and Years 8, 9 and 10 at Llanishen. As a result of this pre-pilot, we modified and simplified the questionnaire, particularly for the younger children (there was already a different questionnaire for primary and secondary school children), rethought the structure of the classroom based activities, and clarified the video diary task.

■ *Questionnaire*

As a methodological tool, questionnaires are able to provide demographic and patterned responses to a range of specific questions. Each question was coded and input into the quantitative statistical package SPSS to measure different aspects of children's social background and patterns of media use. For both the primary and secondary schools, we used two slightly different questionnaires so that we could capture a broader range of data within the limited time period we had at each institution. The decision to modify the questionnaire and to use two different versions was one we took after lessons learned from the pilot fieldwork.

Questions on the primary and secondary school questionnaire included the following:

■ Demographic data – name, age, gender, school year, city/town lived in
■ Thoughts about adult news – what is it?; what types consumed?; general interest in news – self and other children; who is most interested in news in their home?
■ *Newsround* – thoughts on whether it is interesting to children; frequency of use – television bulletin and website
■ Levels of interactivity with media, including *Newsround* (frequency; formats with which they have interacted; ease of use)

Efforts to refine the questionnaire were limited by the amount of time available in our fieldwork with the children. This meant that it was not possible to use a standardised questionnaire for each of the two groups if we were to address all of the questions we wished to pose. In retrospect, this was both a strength and a weakness of our approach. It was a strength in than we were able to include a broader range of questions than might otherwise have been the case. It was a weakness in that it was not possible to get fully comparable sets of data across all primary school children and also across the secondary sample group.

■ *Classroom Based Activities*

Classroom based activities allowed spaces for our participants to demonstrate their knowledge of the television bulletin and website, and to support and encourage one another to come up with ways to improve *Newsround* so that it was more engaging and relevant for its audience. Activities consisted of group discussions based on exploring the *Newsround* website, asking children if they already used it. Very few of the younger children (with the exception of children at Radnor Primary School in Cardiff who were daily users of the website in specific classes at school) were familiar with the website. As such, the group activity often consisted of asking children to examine it closely and indicate what they found to be interesting, what they would click on (what types of news, games, quizzes, pictures, etc.), and their views on the design and layout of the website. In these instances, we found that this was some children's first experience of the website, and many were intrigued by the content (especially games, certain news themes and visuals), indicating that they would be likely to visit the website in future. Most of the older children (secondary school) had gone on the website at some point, but indicated that much of the content was not sufficiently interesting or challenging for young people their age. An exception to this seemed to be the chat boards, which a number indicated they sometimes used.

Two additional activities were variously employed within each year group. The first activity consisted of asking the children to comment on the website. One half of the group indicated what they liked, and offered suggestions about features *Newsround* should keep in any website redesign. The other half of the group was asked to critique the website and to come up with suggestions to improve it.

A second activity, used in other groups (randomly assigned to get a range of age group input), was to undertake the same activity but this time in relation to *Newsround*'s television bulletin.

A third activity, which we employed primarily with the oldest age group in the primary schools and the oldest in the secondary schools, was to get the children to imagine that they were a reporter trying to pitch a news story to *Newsround*. We did not ask the children to write a story, but instead to develop a story idea. This distinction proved to be a rather difficult assignment for many of the children involved, particularly those in the primary schools. As a result, we had to take the time to explain the difference to them, encouraging them to come up with an idea of something about which they were familiar – such as a story on school dinners. We would then note that since this story idea had been covered so many times in the news, including on *Newsround*, that if they were to get a *Newsround* editor to accept their story idea, they would have to find a new angle. Taking the time to explain this particular activity proved to be important in getting the children to think as a reporter of news rather than as a news consumer.

■ *Video Diaries*

The third method used in this study was the video diary. We asked each of the 200 plus children to record three short (10-minutes or less) video diaries, over the course of several weeks, responding to questions around three different topics.[1] The theme in week one revolved around citizenship. In week two, children were asked to comment on questions around interactivity and in week three on *Newsround*'s news content.[2] In addition to providing a space for children to express their views on such questions, the video diaries gave many an opportunity to learn how to use a camcorder. Additionally, we taught them how to construct a visual account of their responses to a series of questions about *Newsround*. This

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[1] Children agreed to allow us to quote their comments from group activities and video diaries provided only first names, city and school year or ages were used to maintain anonymity.
[2] In some schools, this activity proved to be less than popular with the teachers as it required additional instruction to the children, and arranging locations and times for pupils to record their video diaries in school time.

gave them the opportunity to reflect on how the programme and website address children as citizens actively engaged in the world around them. Each child was provided with a folder explaining the activities each week and spaces in which to write their ideas down in response to a series of questions before they entered the 'diary room' to record. Since we were asking them to watch the *Newsround* television bulletin or to visit the website at least one time in each of the three weeks they were recording a video diary, we explained that writing down notes to address each of the questions would help them to remember their initial thoughts and ideas.

Visual data collection proved to be especially important for the younger children, whose elementary writing skills can make it difficult to fully express themselves. Some indicated at the end of their final video diary that they enjoyed the exercise so much that they would like to have an ongoing opportunity to make and post video diaries on the *Newsround* website. Needless to say, with the younger children this might prove to be difficult, particularly because many lack the technical know-how, or the specific equipment necessary. Additionally, in terms of issues around child safety and around the ethics of using visual material generated by children, it would be important to take into account that some parents might not want their children to upload video diary content on the internet, even if it is for the BBC.

Should a news provision be developed for teenagers, however, this idea might be explored further. A number of teenagers in our study appeared to have fairly well-developed technical knowledge of recording visual material (via video, digital camera and mobile phone) and downloading it, as well as having fewer parental restrictions on their internet activities. That said, many indicated that any cost related to downloading material onto a BBC teenagers news website would probably result in parental restrictions.

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results

■96.8% of the children surveyed find the news to be 'interesting' ■ TV IS CHILDREN'S 'FAVOURITE PLACE FOR NEWS' ■ *They think 'Mum' is the person most interested in news at home* ■ More girls than boys say they visit *Newsround*'s website ■

the questionnaire:
research headlines

■ The majority of the children (96.8%) surveyed find the news to be 'interesting.' Only three (3% of those asked) did not.

■ Children offered a wide range of definitions of news. Key concepts included 'information'; 'reporting what's going on'; 'the world'. Local issues, including weather, were also seen as important.

■ Television is children's 'favourite place for news'. 52% mentioned TV by itself as their 'favourite.' When TV plus another medium, e.g. 'TV and newspapers', was included, it was mentioned by 67%. This preference was true of both primary and secondary school children.

■ 'News I enjoy'. Children mentioned 81 different types of enjoyable news topics. Professional news agendas were strongly represented e.g. 'current affairs' and 'crime stories', and also information relevant to children e.g. 'videogame reviews' and 'statistics on truancy rates'.

■ Children watch *Newsround* regularly: 37% watched it 'most days' and over two thirds (67.7%) watched it at least once a week. Only 10 children (4.6%) said they 'never' watched it.

■ *Newsround* appeals to younger viewers: 46.8% of the primary group watched *Newsround* most days, whereas only 9.1% of the secondary group were frequent viewers.

■ Visiting the website is less popular: 46.3%of the 121 children who answered this question, 'never' visit the website. Only 11 (9.1%) visited it 'most days.'

■ There were age differences in website use: younger children were more likely than the older ones to visit the website 'most days'. A greater number of younger than older children also said they 'never' visited the website.

■ There were no significant gender differences in viewing *Newsround*, but girls were more likely than boys to say that they visited the website.

■ 'Mum' is the person in the household most interested in news (32.1% of all answers). 'Dad' was listed first in 23.2% of answers.

■ Use of interactive technology varied considerably. Most frequent uses were the red button; news websites and games. Least frequent uses were 'complaining'; sending letters or speaking on air; and using a webcam.

the questionnaire

The main findings from the questionnaire are set out below, including the statistical tables on which they are based. Each table is accompanied by explanatory comments. These tables illustrate the main responses the children gave in their questionnaires, followed by brief discussion of the implications of the findings. The demographics (numbers, locations, ages and genders) of the 219 children in the study are showed in the Appendix to this report.

As we have already indicated in this report, there were four slightly different versions of the questionnaire, partly to simplify the versions given to younger children, who took much more time to answer it, and partly to provide different options for different groups of children.

219 children were given the questionnaire altogether, but not all of them answered all of the questions. Where a smaller sample of children is involved, this is specified in the tables and discussion. Many of the questions were open-ended, allowing children to give their own definitions and to express their opinions in their own words. We feel this gives a more accurate account of their genuine views than if we had used multiple choice or forced choice questions. It does, however, make the data more challenging to code and interpret. Still, these individual answers, we think, repay attention.

CHILDREN *find news interesting*

Table 1. Is News Interesting?

	Frequency	%	Valid %
Valid			
Sometimes	55	25.1	61.8
Yes	31	14.2	34.8
No	3	1.4	3.4
Total	89	40.6	100
Missing			
System	129	58.9	
99.00	1	.5	
Total	130	59.4	
Total	219	100	

The main justification for our study can be summed up by the figures in the table above, which shows the answers children gave to the question of whether they thought the news was 'interesting.' Their answers are a strong riposte to those who argue that children and young people are apathetic and not concerned about current affairs. Only three out of the 129 children who answered this question said 'no.'

The majority of those who answered (Valid Percent 61.8%) said news was interesting 'sometimes' and over a third (34.8%) said unequivocally 'yes.' This is the background against which our other questions in the questionnaire sought to explore in more depth what children thought news *was*; what they liked and disliked about it; where they were likely to seek it; and which groups were more or less likely to be interested in it. These questions also ask specifically about children's consumption of *Newsround* (both the TV bulletin and website) and their use of interactive media.

CHILDREN *offered a wide range of definitions of news*

The children were asked to define news – this was an open-ended question. Their definitions were then post-coded and grouped into broad categories. Even with this grouping, there were 38 different definitions. We coded something separately if there was an original word, such as 'gossip' in it, that had not been used in other definitions, or if the whole wording was unique, such as 'what's happening in the country'.

Although these categorisations could have been grouped even further – all of them included common factors such as 'telling' or 'information' - we decided to code as many of the individual definitions as possible to preserve the flavour and variety of children's understandings of the topic.

As Table 2 shows, the biggest grouping demonstrates definitions which included three key concepts: the concepts of 'knowing'

(information); 'what's going on' (i.e. reporting of incidents) and 'the world.' These three concepts turned up, either individually or together, in all the children's definitions. In some of the definitions, children replaced 'the world' with 'the country' and in many of the individual definitions, more specifics of news were given, such as 'weather' or 'murders'.

A number of definitions included value judgements, such as news 'helps' or 'news is good.' Overall, all 219 children who answered this question, from the four nations of the country, had a concept of news drawn from obvious familiarity with the way professional, mainly broadcast, news is constructed. Local news was sometimes specified, but on the whole, children's definitions incorporated a strong sense of the importance of the global. When we look at their answers to the questions in Table 3, we can see where their definitions of news are most likely to be drawn from.

the CONCEPTS of 'knowing'; 'what's going on', and 'the world' *are recurrently mentioned,* individually or together, in children's DEFINITIONS OF NEWS

Table 2. What News Is

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
Knowing going, on in world	44	20.1	20.2
In your own area and around the world	26	11.9	11.9
Information about things	24	11.0	11.0
Telling the world things that have happened	23	10.5	10.6
Interesting round the world	16	7.3	7.3
Update on what is going on in the world	12	5.5	5.5
Anything new that is happening	7	3.2	3.2
World, own area and weather	5	2.3	2.3
Summary of important events	4	1.8	1.8
Way to find out regarding recent events	4	1.8	1.8
Telling what goes on in the world in newspapers and TV	4	1.8	1.8
Information telling the public regarding countries, politics, sports, weather	4	1.8	1.8
Programme about different events round the globe, happy or sad	4	1.8	1.8
Important international or local news which affects British people	4	1.8	1.8
Important information, e.g. crime/weather	4	1.8	1.8
Show or writing about events round the world	3	1.4	1.4
Programme on TV, a local update of town, country politics	3	1.4	1.4
Boring	2	.9	.9
Stories on bad and good	2	.9	.9
News to share out	2	.9	.9
Things people need to know	2	.9	.9
Telling everyone what is happening	2	.9	.9
Daily or weekly update on the world, good or bad	2	.9	.9
Way of bringing information to people all round the world	2	.9	.9
Something people do not know about that is information	2	.9	.9
Stuff people should know about the world	2	.9	.9
Stories	1	.5	.5
Source of information broadcast to public	1	.5	.5
Interesting and popular stories from round the world for public's view	1	.5	.5
Something really big like gossip	1	.5	.5
Telling global and interesting and local news to public in different form	1	.5	.5
Factual information on current events, relayed to us through the media	1	.5	.5
Murders and interesting facts	1	.5	.5
North East West South - NEWS	1	.5	.5
Help people	1	.5	.5
News is good to know what is going on within the country	1	.5	.5
What is happening in the country	1	.5	.5
Total	218	99.5	100
Missing			
System	1	.5	
Total	219	100	

TV *is children's favourite place for news*

This was one of the most striking findings of the study, and somewhat unexpected, given what appears to be the current trend at the BBC and elsewhere toward increasingly offering educational and factual material online.

As Table 3 shows, more than half of the sample – 112 children, nearly 52% – mentioned TV by itself as their 'favourite place for news.' When TV plus another medium, e.g. 'TV and newspapers', are included, 146 of the children – 67% of the sample – mentioned TV as 'favourite', as Table 4 shows.

News would appear to be seen by the children we surveyed primarily as something which appears in broadcast form (especially TV),

rather than as a webcast or print genre (see Ofcom, 2007). Newspapers, the internet and radio were all distantly second to TV– with 6.9% of the children mentioning each of them. An interesting finding was that 12 children - 6.5% - mentioned 'friends' as their favourite source of news. Friends also turned up in some of the composite answers. Again, this was not predicted – and we might want to consider word-of-mouth among peers as an important influence in the way children and young people formulate their identities as news-consuming citizens. Peer influences could also be a factor in their use of interactive websites and is obviously a big factor in mobile phone use; this merits further research.

Table 3. *Favourite Place for News*

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
TV	112	51.1	51.9
Newspapers	15	6.8	6.9
Internet	15	6.8	6.9
Radio	14	6.4	6.5
Friends	12	5.5	5.6
Friends and parents	8	3.7	3.7
TV and internet	8	3.7	3.7
TV and newspaper	6	2.7	2.7
Parents	4	1.8	1.9
Radio and TV	3	1.4	1.4
TV and parents	3	1.4	1.4
All ways	3	1.4	1.4
TV, internet and friends	2	.9	.9
TV and friends	2	.9	.9
Headlines, parents and friends	1	.5	.5
Friends, TV and newspaper	1	.5	.5
Newspapers and internet	1	.5	.5
Radio and friends	1	.5	.5
TV, radio and internet	1	.5	.5
Newspapers and radio	1	.5	.5
TV, internet and newspapers	1	.5	.5
Internet and family	1	.5	.5
TV, paper and internet	1	.5	.5
Total	216	98.6	100.0
Missing			
99.00	2	.9	
System	1	.5	
Total	3	1.4	
Total	219	100.0	

Table 4. *TV versus non-TV*

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
TV	146	66.7	67.3
Non-TV	70	32.0	32.3
99.0	1	.5	.5
Total	217	99.1	100
Missing			
System	2	.9	
Total	219	100.0	

Table 5 shows that TV was nearly equally valued as a 'favourite source' by both older and younger children. Out of the 146 who said so, 48% were secondary school and 52% were primary school. In the non-TV group, secondary school children were more highly represented.

Table 5. *Age and 'TV as favourite source of news'*

	Primary school*	Secondary school**	Total
TV	76 (52.1%)	70 (47.9%)	146
Non-TV	28 (40%)	42 (60%)	70

*104 children aged 8-12   **112 children aged 13-15

NEWS *I enjoy watching*

As we have already indicated, we did not have sufficient time with each group of children during our fieldwork to allow them to complete the same questionnaire. As a result, not all of the children answered all of the questions.

As the spread of answers suggests (see Table 6), there was a large number of topics mentioned by children. We decided to code them as individually as possible rather than trying to group them into categories; this was, again, in order to give a flavour of children's diverse responses. Obviously professional news agendas are strongly represented in these comments with 'current affairs' and 'crime stories' mentioned in various forms.

Information relevant to children was also mentioned, for example, 'videogame reviews' and 'statistics (i.e. truancy rates)'. Ongoing news topics, such as sports, science, the environment were mentioned, as were one-off newsworthy events such as 'disasters' and 'bombs.'

The range of topics indicates that these children were very familiar with the kinds of news stories which typically feature in adult news and on *Newsround*. The mention of local news from some children echoes the comments they made in the qualitative tasks and video diaries about the importance of seeing their own nations reflected in news coverage.

We asked the children about news they enjoyed reading, as well as watching – to avoid biasing them towards seeing TV as the only source of news. 'Reading' was intended to include websites or newspapers. As Table 7 indicates, the news they enjoyed reading covered much of the same ground as news they enjoyed watching – but there was much more specificity about personalities: celebrities (both for and against); Princess Diana; missing children, including Madeleine McCann. Printed news appears to have a more distinctly tabloid flavour for these children than does broadcast news. It suggests that these children do consume print media, whether in the form of newspapers and magazines in the household or through the internet or both.

Table 6. News I Enjoy Watching

		Frequency	%	Valid %
Valid	Sports	4	1.8	10.8
	Celebrities, children	2	.9	5.4
	Boats, RNLI	1	.5	2.7
	Local things, animals, criminals, actors	1	.5	2.7
	Death, rape, weather	1	.5	2.7
	Natural disasters	1	.5	2.7
	Disasters, weather, Cardiff	1	.5	2.7
	Internet	1	.5	2.7
	Science, nature, weird unseen before stories	1	.5	2.7
	Court processes, news affecting me in Wales	1	.5	2.7
	Global warming / War in Iraq	1	.5	2.7
	Animals and technology	1	.5	2.7
	News about people	1	.5	2.7
	Celebrities, killings, kidnaps	1	.5	2.7
	Natural disasters, bombing, kidnapping	1	.5	2.7
	Sports events, space exploration, the environment	1	.5	2.7
	Favourite bands, books, celebrities, movies	1	.5	2.7
	Anything	1	.5	2.7
	Dramatic stories	1	.5	2.7
	Iraq, scientific discoveries, movies, music	1	.5	2.7
	Stuff worth knowing, not too long winded	1	.5	2.7
	Sports and international headlines	1	.5	2.7
	All types except politics	1	.5	2.7
	Sports and politics	1	.5	2.7
	Anything except the concept of 'Britishness'	1	.5	2.7
	Current affairs	1	.5	2.7
	People's opinions	1	.5	2.7
	Interesting and important stories	1	.5	2.7
	Videogame reviews, new technologies, sports	1	.5	2.7
	Crime stories	1	.5	2.7
	Statistics (i.e. truancy rates)	1	.5	2.7
	Murder	1	.5	2.7
	People	1	.5	2.7
	Total	37	16.9	100
Missing	System	180	82.2	
	99.00	2	9	
	Total	182	83.1	
Total		219	100	

Table 7. News I Enjoy Reading

	Frequency	%	Valid %
Valid			
Sports	11	5.0	18.0
People, animals, houses	2	.9	3.3
Anything	2	.9	3.3
Good news	2	.9	3.3
Lots of pictures	1	.5	1.6
Exciting news	1	.5	1.6
Actors and singers	1	.5	1.6
New inventions, animals loose	1	.5	1.6
Young girls who have died	1	.5	1.6
Life stories and sports	1	.5	1.6
Madeleine McCann	1	.5	1.6
Celebrities and real life	1	.5	1.6
Newspapers	1	.5	1.6
Government and what they are planning to benefit us	1	.5	1.6
Lots of things	1	.5	1.6
Animals and technology	1	.5	1.6
Local issues	1	.5	1.6
Natural disasters	1	.5	1.6
Stories about nice things	1	.5	1.6
Tales of criminality	1	.5	1.6
New species, princess Diana, world events in general	1	.5	1.6
Football, hooliganism, kidnapping, bombings, natural disaster	1	.5	1.6
Sport and war	1	.5	1.6
Natural disasters, world records	1	.5	1.6
Favourite bands, books, celebrities, movies	1	.5	1.6
Proposed government policies	1	.5	1.6
Historical stories	1	.5	1.6
Iraq, scientific discoveries, movies, music and videogames	1	.5	1.6
Trivial stories	1	.5	1.6
Stuff worth knowing, not too long winded	1	.5	1.6
Sports, politics and national headlines	1	.5	1.6
Sports and weird occurrences	1	.5	1.6
Finance and politics	1	.5	1.6
Optimistic and comedic news stories	1	.5	1.6
Anything except celebrity news	1	.5	1.6
National news	1	.5	1.6
Anything except politics	1	.5	1.6
Current affairs	1	.5	1.6
Local and funny articles	1	.5	1.6
Amazing animals, places, people	1	.5	1.6
Scientific news, game news	1	.5	1.6
Understandable stories	1	.5	1.6
Fun news	1	.5	1.6
New and mysterious stories	1	.5	1.6
Medical discoveries	1	.5	1.6
Children of my age	1	.5	1.6
Things you can discuss with your friends	1	.5	1.6
Celebrities	1	.5	1.6
Total	61	27.9	100
Missing			
System	155	70.8	
99.0	3	1.4	
Total	158	72.1	
Total	219	100	

CHILDREN *watch* Newsround *regularly*

Obviously for our collaborators at the BBC, and specifically the *Newsround* team, it was important to ask the children about their consumption of *Newsround*, whether on TV, or through the website or both. 127 respondents answered these questions – again, representing all four nations in the study.

Almost one half of the 127 children who answered this question (47%) watched it 'most days' and over two thirds (67.7%) watched it at least once a week. Only 10 children (4.6%) said they 'never' watched it. The qualitative research supported this finding, indicating that *Newsround* is a very familiar ingredient in children's media consumption, and is likely to have influenced their ideas of what news is, and should be, even for those who no longer watch it very often. However, the qualitative research also showed that older children (mainly those at secondary school) felt that the programme no longer addressed them. They were aware of a vacuum of information provision for their age group (13-15 year olds).

We did an age breakdown of frequency of viewing *Newsround* according to whether the children were in primary or secondary school, in order to distinguish between the programme's target audience (under 12s) and those whom it no longer includes as its constituency. Table 9 in the next section of this report shows the outcome of this analysis.

Table 8. I Watch Newsround

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
Often, most days	47	21.5	37.0
Sometimes, once a week	39	17.8	30.7
Occasionally	31	14.2	24.4
Never	10	4.6	7.9
Total	127	58.0	100
Missing			
System	67	30.6	
99.00	25	11.4	
Total	92	42.0	
Total	219	100	

Table 9. Newsround *Viewers in Primary / Secondary School*

	Primary school	Sec. school	Total
Often, most days			
Count	37	9	46
% within 'I watch *Newsround*'	80.4	19.6	100
% within primary or secondary	46.8	19.1	36.5
% of total	29.4	7.1	36.5
Sometimes, once a week			
Count	21	18	39
% within 'I watch *Newsround*'	53.8	46.2	100
% within primary or secondary	26.6	38.3	31
% of total	16.7	14.3	31
Occasionally			
Count	16	15	31
% within 'I watch *Newsround*'	51.6	48.4	100
% within primary or secondary	20.3	31.9	24.6
% of total	12.7	11.9	24.6
Never			
Count	5	5	10
% within 'I watch *Newsround*'	50.0	50.0	100
% within primary or secondary	6.3	10.6	7.9
% of total	4.0	4.0	7.9
Total			
Count	79	47	126
% within 'I watch *Newsround*'	62.7	37.3	100
% within primary or secondary	100	100	100
% of total	62.7	37.3	100

Table 9 shows clearly the marked difference between primary and secondary children in terms of frequency of viewing. 37 out of the 79 primary school children (46.8%) watched *Newsround* most days, whereas only nine of the 47 secondary school children (19.1%) were frequent viewers. The differences were significant (chi-square) at the $p = .02$ level. This was to be expected in terms of the programme's stated target audience – but it does underline again the lack of targeted news provision for a group who are still children, the 12 to 15 year olds, and who are still interested in, and familiar with, news in all its varieties as the definitions and tastes outlined above indicate.

VISITING *the website is less popular*

Table 10. I Visit Newsround's *Website*

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
Never	56	25.6	46.2
Occasionally	35	16	28.9
Sometimes, once a week	19	8.7	15.7
Often, most days	11	5	9.1
Total	121	55.3	100
Missing			
System	67	30.6	
99.0	31	14.2	
Total	98	44.7	
Total	219	100	

The largest group of the 121 children (46.2%) who answered the question on how often they visit the *Newsround* website indicated that they 'never' do – Only 11 (9.1%) visited it 'most days.' This contrasts with the much greater frequency of viewing the broadcast version of the programme. Again, we did a breakdown according to younger and older children, to see whether this was reflected in age differences (see Table 11).

Here the outcome is less emphatic – but there are still some suggestive age differences: the younger children were more likely than the older ones to visit the website 'most days', with eight of the 74 (10.8%) saying they did so, compared to only three out of 46 older children (6.5%). More younger than older children also visited it 'occasionally.' But more young than older children, also said they 'never' visited the website: 37 out of 74 (50%) primary schoolchildren, compared to 19 out of 46 secondary school children (41.3%). These differences were significant (chi-square) at the p = .04 level.

There were no significant gender differences in viewing *Newsround* (see Table 12), but girls were more likely than boys to say that they visited the website regularly (see Table 13). Girls were slightly more likely than boys (40% to 34.3%) to be frequent viewers of the programme, and boys are more likely than girls (11.9% to 3.3%) to say they 'never' watched it. However, these differences were not significant.

Table 11. I Visit Newsround's *Website in Primary and Secondary School*

	Primary school	Sec. school	Total
Often, most days			
Count	8	3	11
% within 'I go to website'	72.7	27.3	100
% within primary or secondary	10.8	6.5	9.2
% of total	6.7	2.5	9.2
Sometimes, once a week			
Count	14	4	18
% within 'I go to website'	77.8	2.2	100
% within primary or secondary	18.9	8.7	15
% of total	11.7	3.3	15
Occasionally			
Count	15	20	35
% within 'I go to website'	42.9	57.1	100
% within primary or secondary	20.3	43.5	29.2
% of total	12.5	16.7	29.2
Never			
Count	37	19	56
% within 'I go to website'	66.1	33.9	100
% within primary or secondary	50	41.3	46.7
% of total	30.8	15.8	46.7
Total			
Count	74	46	120
% within 'I go to website'	61.7	38.3	100
% within primary or secondary	100	100	100
% of total	61.7	38.3	100

Table 13 shows (noting that there were only 65 responses to this question) that – again, perhaps counter-intuitively – girls are twice as likely as boys to visit the website 'most days' (12.5% to 6.2%) and 'occasionally' (37.5% to 21.5%). Girls are also less likely to say they 'never' visit it: 35.7% of girls say 'never' compared to 55.4% of boys. These are still quite high proportions for 'never' for both sexes, however. Statistically the differences were not quite significant (chi-square): p = .085.
In qualitative terms, there are some suggestive gender differences in this group of 121 children which are worth pursuing.

Table 12. *I Watch* Newsround *by Gender*

	Boy	Girl	Total
Often, most days			
Count	23	24	47
% within 'I watch *Newsround*'	48.9	51.1	100
% within boy or girl	34.3	40	37
% of total	18.1	18.9	37
Sometimes, once a week			
Count	18	21	39
% within 'I watch *Newsround*'	46.2	53.8	100
% within boy or girl	26.9	35	30.7
% of total	14.2	16.5	30.7
Occasionally			
Count	18	13	31
% within 'I watch *Newsround*'	58.1	41.9	100
% within boy or girl	26.9	21.7	24.4
% of total	14.2	10.2	24.4
Never			
Count	8	2	10
% within 'I watch *Newsround*'	80	20.0	100
% within boy or girl	11.9	3.3	7.9
% of total	6.3	1.6	7.9
Total			
Count	67	60	127
% within 'I watch *Newsround*'	52.8	47.2	100
% within boy or girl	100	100	100
% of total	52.8	47.2	100

Table 13. *I Visit the Website by Gender*

	Boy	Girl	Total
Often, most days			
Count	4	7	11
% within 'I go to website'	36.4	63.6	100
% within boy or girl	6.2	12.5	9.1
% of total	3.3	5.8	9.1
Sometimes, once a week			
Count	11	8	19
% within 'I go to website'	57.9	42.1	100
% within boy or girl	16.9	14.3	15.7
% of total	9.1	6.6	15.7
Occasionally			
Count	14	21	35
% within 'I go to website'	40	60	100
% within boy or girl	21.5	37.5	28.9
% of total	11.6	17.4	28.9
Never			
Count	36	20	56
% within 'I go to website'	64.3	35.7	100
% within boy or girl	55.4	35.7	46.3
% of total	29.8	16.5	46.3
Total			
Count	65	56	121
% within 'I go to website'	53.7	46.3	100
% within boy or girl	100	100	100
% of total	53.7	46.3	100

there were NO SIGNIFICANT GENDER DIFFERENCES in viewing *Newsround*, but girls were more likely than boys to say that they visited the WEBSITE regularly

WHO *is most interested in the news in your home?*

This was another open-ended question and again it produced what could be seen as a surprising finding with 'Mum' being by far the most frequently mentioned as the person who is most interested in the news at home (32.1% of all answers). 'Dad' came next with 23.2% answers, then both parents on 16.1% and then, again perhaps surprisingly, 'me' with 10.7% of answers. Given what appears to be a long-standing view held by most news organisations that women are primarily interested in 'soft' news (including family, lifestyle, celebrity, fashion), whereas men tend to prefer 'hard' news topics such politics, business, and war (Allan, 2004; Carter, Branston and Allan, 1998; Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, 2004), this finding would appear to challenge such an assumption. At the very least, this is not how their parents' news consumption appears to the children in our sample.

Table 14. Who Is Most Interested in News in Your Home

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
Mum	36	16.4	32.1
Dad	26	11.9	23.2
Parents	18	8.2	16.1
Me	12	5.5	10.7
Grandpa	5	2.3	4.5
No-one	3	1.4	2.7
All	2	.9	1.8
Mum and I	2	.9	1.8
Me and dad	2	.9	1.8
Siblings	2	.9	1.8
Not sure	1	.5	.9
Me and my parents	1	.5	.9
Grandma	1	.5	.9
All except younger brothers	1	.5	.9
Total	112	51.1	100
Missing			
System	100	45.7	
99.0	7	3.2	
Total	107	48.9	
Total	219	100	

USE *of interactive media*

Tables 15 through 31 present the findings of a range of questions that we asked children about their use of interactive media.

Table 15. Have You Ever Sent a Text?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	73	33.3	77.7
Yes	21	9.6	22.3
Total	94	42.9	100
Missing			
System	106	48.4	
99.0	19	8.7	
Total	125	57.1	
Total	219	100	

Table 16. Have You Ever Phoned a News Programme?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	74	33.8	78.7
Yes	20	9.1	21.3
Total	994	42.9	100
Missing			
System	105	47.9	
99.0	20	9.1	
Total	125	57.1	
Total	219	100	

Table 17. Have You Ever Sent an Email to a News Organisation?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	78	35.6	83.9
Yes	15	6.8	16.1
Total	93	42.5	100
Missing			
System	105	47.9	
99.0	21	9.6	
Total	126	57.5	
Total	219	100	

Table 18. Have You Ever Visited a News Website?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	34	15.5	37
Yes	58	26.5	63
Total	92	42	100
Missing			
System	105	47.9	
99.0	22	10	
Total	127	58	
Total	219	100	

Table 19. Have You Ever Posted a Letter to a News Organisation?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	81	37	87.1
Yes	12	5.5	12.9
Total	93	42.5	100
Missing			
System	105	47.9	
99.0	21	9.6	
Total	126	57.5	
Total	219	100	

Table 20. Have You Ever Pressed the Red Button?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	30	13.7	32.6
Yes	62	28.3	67.4
Total	92	42	100
Missing			
System	105	47.9	
99.0	22	10	
Total	127	58	
Total	219	100	

Table 21. Have You Ever Entered Competition?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	50	22.8	63.3
Yes	29	13.2	36.7
Total	79	36.1	100
Missing			
System	105	47.9	
99.0	35	16	
Total	140	63.9	
Total	219	100	

Table 22. Have You Ever Voted or Nominated Someone?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	52	23.7	68.4
Yes	24	11	31.6
Total	76	34.7	100
Missing			
System	106	48.4	
99.0	37	16.9	
Total	143	65.3	
Total	219	100	

Table 23. Have You Ever Responded to a Programme Feature?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	59	26.9	76.6
Yes	18	8.2	23.4
Total	77	35.2	100
Missing			
System	106	48.4	
99.0	36	16.4	
Total	142	64.8	
Total	219	100	

Table 24. Have You Ever Spoken on Air?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	67	30.6	85.9
Yes	11	5	14.1
Total	78	35.6	100
Missing			
System	107	48.9	
99.0	34	15.5	
Total	141	64.4	
Total	219	100	

Table 25. Have You Ever Entered a Quiz?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	49	22.4	64.5
Yes	27	12.3	35.5
Total	76	34.7	100
Missing			
System	106	48.4	
99.0	37	16.9	
Total	143	65.3	
Total	219	100	

Table 26. Have You Ever Complained about a Programme?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	73	33.3	93.6
Yes	5	2.3	6.4
Total	78	35.6	100
Missing			
System	106	48.4	
99.0	35	16	
Total	141	64.4	
Total	219	100	

Table 27. Have You Ever Played a Game Online?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	33	20.1	57.1
Yes	44	15.1	42.9
Total	77	35.2	100
Missing			
System	106	48.4	
99.0	36	16.4	
Total	142	64.8	
Total	219	100	

Table 28. Have You Ever Changed the Angle or Used Viewercam?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	64	29.2	86.5
Yes	10	4.6	13.5
Total	74	33.8	100
Missing			
System	106	48.4	
99.0	39	17.8	
Total	145	66.2	
Total	219	100	

Table 29. Have You Ever Followed Up a News Story to Find Out More?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	42	19.2	54.5
Yes	35	16	45.5
Total	77	35.2	100
Missing			
System	105	47.9	
99.0	37	16.9	
Total	142	64.8	
Total	219	100	

Table 30. Have You Ever Donated to a Charity?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	36	16.4	53.2
Yes	41	18.7	46.8
Total	77	35.2	100
Missing			
System	107	48.9	
99.0	35	16	
Total	142	64.8	
Total	219	100	

Table 31. Have You Ever Made any Comments to a News Organisation?

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid			
No	189	86.3	95.9
Yes	8	3.7	4.1
Total	197	90	100
Missing			
System	17	7.8	
99.0	5	2.3	
Total	22	10	
Total	219	100	

The above tables were all simple yes/no answers and they show that there is considerable variation in children's use of interactive media. The most and least frequent uses of these interactive media are summarised below:

MOST FREQUENT USES

- *Red button on TV 67.4% (base 92)*
- *Go to news website 63% (base 92)*
- *Games 57.1% (base 77)*
- *Donate to charity 53.2% (base 77)*

LEAST FREQUENT USES

- *Complain 93.6% said NO (base 78)*
- *Send letter 87.1% NO (base 93)*
- *Change angle/Use viewercam 86.5% NO (base 74)*
- *Speak on air 85.9% NO (base 78)*

SELECTED *comments on the questionnaire*

The bulk of the qualitative comments are found in the reports of the classroom tasks that the children carried out, and in the video diaries. However, the few piquant remarks made by some children on their questionnaires are worth noting below. They support the other qualitative data in signalling, for example, a desire for more news from the different nations (and less 'about England').

Table 32. Comments on the Questionnaire

	Freq.	%	Valid %
Valid	212	96.8	96.8
Bias to England, not Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland	2	.9	.9
No more health reports!	1	.5	.5
Newsround rules!	1	.5	.5
Wider range of stories on *Newsround* and a longer show	1	.5	.5
Should be more like TMI news	1	.5	.5
Too much about poverty	1	.5	.5
Total	219	100	100

classroom based activities and video diaries: research headlines

■ Children and young people see themselves as citizens and want to play a more active role in the public sphere. They feel their voices hold special merit because of the unique position they hold in society.

■ *Newsround* is an important tool for citizenship development. It provides children and young people with an outlet that prioritises their voices. It makes their ideas feel important.

■ *Newsround* covers stories that are interesting for children, though more attention needs to be paid to issues affecting children in different nations.

■ Though many children and young people find it easy to contact *Newsround,* some barriers exist which prevent them from contacting and interacting with the programme.

■ Adult news frequently ignores children's voices and perspectives.

■ Children over the age of 12 feel that they have outgrown *Newsround,* yet express the idea that they are not quite ready for adult news. A teenage level news provision, some suggest, should be developed.

■ *Children and young people* see themselves as citizens and want to play A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE ■ *Newsround* is an important tool for CITIZENSHIP DEVELOPMENT ■ *Newsround* provides **children and young people** with a unique outlet that *prioritizes their voices* ■ ADULT NEWS frequently IGNORES CHILDREN'S VOICES **and perspectives** ■ *A news* provision **for** *teenagers* should BE DEVELOPED ■

Children were asked the following three questions: To what extent does *Newsround* encourage you to think about citizenship (can you give any examples)? Does *Newsround* give you a chance to share your opinions? Please explain. Does *Newsround* make you feel that your ideas are important? The answers revealed something of a split in children's views. There was something of a split in children's responses to these questions. First, an overwhelming majority of respondents felt they had interesting things to share, and examples of topics mentioned include: school, the environment, immigration, war, healthy food, fair trade, animal testing, after school care, healthcare, bullies, speeding cars, partisan politics, and much more. The wide array of topics listed was impressive, demonstrating that children are aware of and attuned to a range of issues, many of which could be defined as 'political':

"I think that even though we can't vote, kids our age have important things to say, for example we have things to say about education and how it can be improved, transport, how it could be cheaper or free for us, and we do have opinions on the government and how they could change or improve services for young people" –(Karishma, Bournemouth, Year 8).

Samer, from Cardiff (Year 9) added that "(kids) have things to say about recycling, animals, pollution and everything." Allowing children and young people to articulate their views on issues that affect their lives was central for them. They recognised that they had worthwhile suggestions deserving attention from adults. As Jack from Cardiff (Year 10) argued:

"For example with education and the government improving teaching standards in Britain, we should be a more influential voice on this topic, as ultimately, we know more about what type of teaching lessons and methods we respond to rather than having adults putting themselves in our perspective. I think we should be more involved in the healthy schools debate by telling our government what we want"

Several children articulated their desire to be part of the public sphere. Many expressed frustration at having to wait until they were 18 to be heard, particularly because they felt they had so many good ideas now:

"I think that kids my age do have important things to say because it's not only that we have things to say when we're 18. There are things we feel are urgent now, and it's not just older people who have good ideas" (Rebecca, Coleraine, Year 10).

If society is truly interested in helping foster citizenship amongst young people, then it could be said that taking their views seriously is a crucial first step. This idea came up numerous times throughout the video diaries. Children frankly stated their disappointment with adults for failing to include them:

"I think we do have good opinions, because the government is not the same age as us so they don't actually know what we want, and just guess, so I think it would be good if they took our opinions more than they do at the moment" (Leah, Bournemouth, Year 8).

While some children simply stated their anger at being excluded, others offered ideas as to why children's voices were ignored: "I think all children's ideas are important, just as important as adults, they just don't let us say anything because they think that adults' ideas are more sensible than children's" (Nat, Bournemouth, Year 5). Researchers have noted that children tend to be regarded as lacking 'reason' or 'rationality,' which is seen to be a basic component of citizenship " (Buckingham, 2000; Carter and Allan, 2005a; Mendes, Carter and Messenger Davies, 2009). Several of our Welsh respondents agreed that adults' assumptions about children's lack of seriousness was one reason why young people tend to be ignored, but they also attributed it to something more:

While young people's representations in adult news is a wholly separate issue, which deserves thorough exploration, these negative representations risk serving to reinforce barring young people from public life (Carter and Messenger Davies, 2005, 2007; Messenger Davies, 2007).

A number of the children said that their ideas held special merit because of the unique position children occupy in society. Their youth allowed them bring to forth "fresh ideas" (Eddie, Glasgow, Year 9) that perhaps had not previously been thought of before. Others argued that children should be listened to because "they are the new future" (Samer, Cardiff, Year 9). This runs contrary to the assumption that age is the most important indicator in whether someone's view is valid or not (the opinions of those under the age of 18 are often regarded as irrelevant).

Children and young people do not spontaneously develop opinions, or become interested in issues once they reach 18, but that they start developing these at an early age. Children's rights theorists tend to agree that the practice of using only age to determine one's ability to be a responsible citizen is flawed because age alone is not a useful indicator of one's capacity for self-determination (Kulynych 2001: 232).

NEWSROUND *is an important space for children's development as citizens*

Not only did the children in our study feel that they had positive ideas to bring to *Newsround*, but that *Newsround* was beneficial for them too. It "shows how you are meant to be a good citizen and encourages being helpful to the community" (Hayden, Bournemouth, Year 8). Others stated that *Newsround* was a positive force in their development because it takes their ideas seriously and "gives you a chance to say what you think about things" (Victoria, Glasgow, Year 8). This sense of inclusion was significant

for many, particularly *Newsround*'s dedication to including everyone and making "sure that all different opinions count" (Mhari, Glasgow, Year 10). This, according to Maria (Coleraine, Year 7), was central because it gives "children our age a voice in our community, and it really helps" in terms of being better citizens.

This idea of citizen development highlights the often subtle ways that the news reflects citizenship practices and provides a key resource for young people to develop and express their ideas and make contributions to society (Buckingham, 2000; Carter and Allan, 2005a; Mendes, Carter and Messenger Davies, 2009). If citizenship, according to the UK Department for Education and Skills (DfES), truly is about developing 'socially and morally responsible' youth who participate in the community, then it would seem as though *Newsround* is already playing an active role in fostering citizenship. As Ronan from Coleraine added (Year 7): "(T)hey make me feel like my ideas are important."

Time and time again, children expressed their frustration over the dearth of available media forums for children and young people where they would be encouraged to engage in public discussion. While feeling that adults tend to ignore children's views, many expressed gratitude towards *Newsround* for prioritising their voices. "Well yeah, we do (have good ideas), but we don't really have a way to get it out. *Newsround* gives news about what we think" (Jordan, Bournemouth, Year 9). This idea that *Newsround* offered a valuable opportunity for children and young people to express and hear ideas was a common theme in all four nations and across the different age groups. Though teenagers were more likely than younger children to state that *Newsround* was not for their particular age group, they still appreciated its significance in terms of giving younger people a chance to express themselves.

■ *Knowledge Sharing*

Turning first to the significance of knowledge sharing, many children stated that *Newsround* is valued because it provides a learning space where they can share their ideas with the world around them, and hear new views which help them to learn and understand. The following quotation sums up this view nicely:

"I think it is important to share ideas with Newsround *because if we know things that other people don't know, then other people can benefit from our knowledge and experience, and they can learn new things" (Chloe, Bournemouth, Year 8).*

Kurt from Coleraine agreed and stated: "It's very important to share your thoughts and ideas with *Newsround* as it's a way to understand and learn" (Year 7). Unlike past researchers who have claimed that young people are politically disengaged (Putnam 2000), these quotations would tend to reinforce research that refutes such assertions (Buckingham 2000; Carter and Allan, 2005a, 2005b; Chekoway et al. 2003; Hine 2004; MacKinnon 2008). Our research findings suggest that young people have a desire to learn about the world around them and to share that with others.

■ *Multiple Perspectives*

The majority of children and young people in our study have demonstrated that not only are they interested in sharing their opinions with others, but that they are also interested in hearing multiple perspectives on current issues and events. This suggests a sophisticated awareness that not everyone is alike, and it is vital for the health of democratic society to hear as many relevant perspectives as possible before passing judgement. Rather than viewing the world (and other children) as a homogenous group, our participants were aware that their age did not mean that they held the same perspectives, views or beliefs:

"It is really important [to hear multiple views] because lots of children have loads of different views and everyone should have the chance to express their opinion about things" (Victoria, Glasgow, Year 8).

Part of this awareness of differences might be explained by the fact that we talked to children from four different nations, so it is perhaps understandable that many indicated that they wanted more news for children like themselves and about their own communities.

■ *Community Building*

Sharing their ideas with *Newsround* was seen to be essential by many of our respondents

because it made them feel an active member of a community of children.

"(I)f something important happens in your region you wouldn't feel alone with what's happening, and you would feel as if there are people who know what you are going through" (Matthew, Bournemouth, Year 8).

This sense of solidarity and a desire to hear and disseminate information to those within their communities indicates the extent to which children and young people long to be included in the public sphere and to be taken seriously. As Maria from Coleraine put it:

"I think it is important to have your ideas heard because children have some exciting and important things to say on some local, and not so local issues, so I think people should give children more of a chance to voice their opinion on things that concern them" (Year 7).

Rather than feeling that children their age did not have valuable things to say, they overwhelmingly claimed that they did, but that there were few outlets for them to express themselves outside of *Newsround*. While there were many articulate examples of this view (see previous section for a more thorough discussion), we will highlight two here:

"I think it's important for us to share our opinions because it's always adults who get to talk and they don't care about children, but Newsround *does" (Martina, Coleraine, Year 8)*

*"…personally, I feel that the views of my age range are generally left out in most news, although they occasionally give examples, it's [*Newsround*] a way for me to share my ideas and have them listened to by an adult who is not my parent. For example, politicians generally won't discuss ideas with teens because they aren't trying to reach us and they don't care about our issues. So I think our views and opinions are not passed across to important members of society" (Edward, Bournemouth, Year 10).*

One conflicting theme that occasionally emerged was where children thought they had interesting opinions, but rejected the idea that children and young people were responsible enough to have these opinions included in the public sphere. For some, it was because children did not have "the maturity to make responsible decisions that will benefit them and society" (Alexander, Coleraine, Year 10), while

for others it was because they felt that children would not understand the consequences of their actions, would not bother to research who to vote for, or that they were susceptible and easily influenced and would end up voting for their parents' choice. Interestingly, all but one of the six respondents who voiced such opinions were teenagers, suggesting perhaps that as they matured, they too began to subscribe to ideas that children are immature, irresponsible, and only want to have fun – or perhaps they were remembering how they felt at that age. Because our small sample size is not representative of teenagers as a whole, we wish to refrain from making broad conclusions about this theme, and instead suggest it is an area that future research could investigate to advantage.

ADULT *news frequently ignores children's voices and perspectives*

In this section, we report from our data in classroom based activities and video diaries, although the quotations from children and young people included here are exclusively from the video diary material.

Many of our respondents were aware of the (mostly) negative, highly stereotyped images of children and young people in adult news.[3] Common representations mentioned included young people depicted as victims, YOBS, hoodies, obese, bullies, or sometimes as positive role models (most often with young athletes). As Tabitha from Glasgow put it: "adult news tends to only talk about young people if they've done something wrong like ASBOs" (Glasgow, Year 8). Some teenagers commented on how children are silenced on adult news or never given the chance to express views in the first place:

> *"Adult news never gives children's opinions and [we] are never on adult news. Like the other day I saw news about how a little girl was missing and her best friend's father was talking about how his daughter*

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[3] It should be noted that we only asked the secondary school children how the adult news covered young people, as we felt that many of the younger ones might not watch adult news.

> *was sad [rather than letting the girl speak for herself]" (Emily, Glasgow, Year 10)*

The absence of children's views on adult news was frustrating for some because it limited their ability to show adults that they had opinions and were citizens after all. Others noted that adult news probably excluded them because it focuses heavily on formal party politics, voting, and other matters in the public sphere.

NEWSROUND *contextualises information for young people in an appropriate and accessible manner*

Gratitude towards *Newsround* for providing context to information that is often lacking in adult news was another prominent theme in the video diaries:

> *"Newsround helps you understand information, and there is lots of information about what goes on around the world" (Jamie Glasgow, Year 9)*

While there is an ongoing debate surrounding what information children and should and should not know (Buckingham, 2000; Postman, 1982/1994' Seiter, 2007), some respondents said that rather than scaring children, the information on *Newsround* can actually help make them feel safer:

> *"I think* Newsround *tells the news in a way that children understand it, and therefore do not need to be scared, for example, thunder and lightning" (Nicole, Coleraine, Year 6)*

While this particular child was not discussing issues such as war, paedophilia or the like, others noted that it was important to know about these things so that they could protect themselves. Ahzha argued that *Newsround* was good because

> *"it talks [about things that affect children, and you don't make it too complicated and you don't talk about stupid things. Adult news doesn't really talk about children that much" (Glasgow, Year 8)*

While certain scholars have discussed the merits of having news provision for children for various reasons, our video diaries indicate that young people particularly appreciate the extra context that *Newsround* adds to news stories, and notes that this separates it from adult news:

> *"Adult news is geared more for adults and I don't usually understand the things they are saying, and the issues they bring up aren't very interesting to me"* (Rebecca, Coleraine, Year 10).

MANY *children and young people find it easy to contact* Newsround, *and are happy with the ways they can interact with the programme and website*

In this section of the report, we again combine insights drawn from children and young people's responses from both the classroom and video diary activities, as many pertain to questions asked across both activities.

As new media technologies emerge, and the methods of interacting with news organisations have extended beyond letter-writing and e-mailing, we felt it was important to ask the participants about their relationship with *Newsround* (particularly the website), the ease in which they could interact with it, and what, if any new forms of interaction they would like to see.[4]

When it came to contacting *Newsround,* a common theme that emerged amongst participants of all ages, genders, and nations was that it was "easy." Participants tended to list the various ways of contacting *Newsround,* including writing letters, emails, comments on chat forums, and the Press Pack.[5] One example comes from James in Bournemouth:

> *"I think it's quite easy, for example, they ask us to send in pictures, and the Press Pack is handy which lets us tell our own stories"* (Year 9).

While data from both the group activities and video diaries indicates that there were many children and young people whose access to the internet was unrestricted, there were just as many who did not have the same freedoms (this was particularly true with the younger children). For them, barriers included a lack of technology; strict parents who limit access; having to share the technology with family members; or no desire to be interactive. Interestingly, our research found two opposing viewpoints.

One view, which was held mainly by young people in Northern Ireland and Scotland, was that while it was easy for *them* to interact with *Newsround,* there were barriers preventing *others* from interacting. A second view was held mainly by those in Bournemouth and Cardiff, indicating that *most* children faced *no* barriers when it came to interacting with *Newsround.* Class might have something to do with these results. While we tried to choose schools situated in areas that would have mixed class, this was not always possible. For example, the secondary schools we visited in Bournemouth were fee paying, with most of the pupils coming from middle-class backgrounds. As such, they tended not to have the same constraints placed on their access to technology as some of the working-class pupils in our study.[6] Our schools in Glasgow, Cardiff and Coleraine, however, were more diverse[7], in terms of class, religion,

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[4] Half of the questionnaires handed out asked respondents to comment on their levels of interactivity. This included asking them if they had ever contacted a news programme for the following reasons: to send a text, phone, e-mail or write a letter, or pressed the red button. If they answered yes, we asked for what reasons did they do this. The choices included: to enter a competition, to vote/nominate, to respond to a feature, to speak 'on air,' to take part in a quiz, to complain, to play a game, to change the view/angle using playercam, to find out something more, or to donate to charity.

[5] The Press Pack is a club which is accessed through the *Newsround* website. Children are able to join the club in order to be given training on how to write a journalistic report on a topic of their choosing. If the editorial team judge it to be of sufficient interest and quality it may be posted on the *Newsround* website.
[6] As explained in our methods section, this was because all of the state schools we approached in Bournemouth declined to take part in the study, leaving us mainly with fee-paying grammar or specialist schools.
[7] The Glasgow and Cardiff primary and secondary schools both had a large mix of ethnic and class backgrounds, while our Coleraine schools were both

and for the former, ethnicity. While some of these students have access to the internet at home, they were surrounded by peers who might not be so fortunate, and therefore often raised issues of access during group activities and in their video diaries.

Another important theme that emerged was that most children and young people were happy with the various ways of interacting with *Newsround* available to them. When asked if they could think of new ways to be interactive that *Newsround* does not already offer, an overwhelming number of respondents said 'no,' or that they were happy with the current ways. Nevertheless, some children had new ideas, which included making their own videos:

> *"I think they could maybe have a video that could be sent to them, so people could show what they want to be done instead of just saying it" (Kathryn, Coleraine, Year 5).*

Aside from using video to interact with *Newsround*, other forms of 'new' technology were proposed including use of blogs, different difficulty levels with the 'search' bar for those whose spelling might be weak, having a 'breaking news' banner on the website, space to upload photos and download music, and more use of the red button during the TV bulletin. Specifically, participants envisaged the red button could be used as a means to send comments, play quizzes and games, and as a general means to interact with *Newsround*. Interestingly, this also represents the only suggestion in direct reference to the TV bulletin on how to make it more interactive. Other forms of 'old' technology were also suggested, including sending a telegram, a fax, phoning in, writing a letter, having a radio programme children could call in to, and mailing in photos.

A number of children also suggested that there was a need for *Newsround* journalists to go out to meet their audiences around the UK. Specifically mentioned was the desire to meet some of the presenters:

> *"I think Newsround should go to schools more often and should hand out surveys and then they [children and young people] can give them story ideas" (Iferonke, Glasgow, Year 8).*

Scholars have suggested that video is a useful method for expressing thoughts and ideas, particularly with younger children whose writing skills may not be as developed (Gauntlett 1996: 92). The idea that *Newsround* should encourage children to send in videos differs in at least one key way from Press Pack reports. Video would require children to come up with an idea, record and edit it with their own equipment and upload it to the *Newsround* website. With the Press Pack, *Newsround* staff assist them with every aspect of this process.

The use of videos as a way of interacting with and contributing content to *Newsround* lacks the attention to narrative that is needed to create a news story. Most of the suggestions made by the children about videos primarily appear to envisage use of the diary form rather than a news report. It was also unclear whether the respondents who suggested this idea had any journalism or video training (aside from what we gave them in order to do their video diary), knew how to upload video online, or if they had the technological capability to produce or edit video at home (Livingstone, 2002; Livingstone and Haddon, 2009). This inability to ask follow up questions demonstrates one of the drawbacks of the video diary as a methodological tool, and is something that future researchers should carefully consider.

Finally, some of the children suggested that there was a need for greater interactivity between *Newsround* and the nations. A popular idea that emerged was that of having a separate *Newsround* "for each nation in the British Isles, like one for Northern Ireland, Wales, Central England, but I think that they could feed into each other to give everyone a clear view of their area" (Maria, Coleraine, Year 7).

While these new ideas are interesting (and some could be easily incorporated), we feel that the news media must be careful when incorporating new forms of technology and interaction with children. During the course of our fieldwork, it became clear to us that while many young people are 'media savvy', and have the necessary *skills* to use a range of new technologies including the internet, they might not *want* to get most of their news online, nor do all have the unrestricted internet *access*.[8] To reiterate, a majority of the children in our study stated they were happy with how *Newsround* currently interacts with them.

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integrated, meaning that they had Protestant and Catholic students.

[8] See Allan (2006) for a discussion of recent developments in online news and journalism.

In the group based activities we asked children to creatively imagine new ways that the TV bulletin and the website might present stories and provide opportunities for the audience to interact with *Newsround*. Our respondents suggested things like making TV stories longer, and having more links, games and quizzes on the website, but there were no real innovative changes suggested. While perhaps this is partly a result of having a hard time imagining new forms of interaction, these responses reaffirm that *Newsround* already has many ways of being interactive, which our respondents were generally happy with. Additionally, because several of our respondents said that they either lacked the technology or access to it, incorporating new forms risks alienating more children from being interactive with the programme.

As a result, we would suggest that further qualitative research with young people needs to be conducted to find out what new technologies children and young people are using, how they use them, what barriers exist, and if or how they could be incorporated into their programme or website.

As indicated in our research, we would suggest that upon further investigation, many children might advocate incorporating interactive elements that are similar to those found on social networking sites (uploading photos and music). More research needs to be undertaken to examine how these activities are and can be used to express and develop citizenship (see Cushion, 2006).

NEWSROUND *should pay more attention to issues affecting children in different nations of the UK*

There was general agreement amongst the children in our study that *Newsround* does not include a sufficient amount of news from the nations. And unsurprisingly, since they are not part of the target audience, teenagers noted that *Newsround* does not represent them or their interests. As a result, many indicated that they did not watch the TV bulletin or go on the

website. That said, most of the younger children felt that *Newsround* generally does a good job covering different kinds of stories:

> *"It does a lot of stories and covers a lot that interests me, and they (*Newsround*) seem to try and get as many voices as they can" (Angela, Coleraine, Year 6)*

Some also noted that *Newsround* was appreciated because it provided children and young people with opportunities to contribute to the news:

> *"Yeah, they do a good job because children can send in their own ideas for a news story and have their own views and input"(Martyn, Cardiff, Yr 8)*

A number of children, particularly those who had reached the last year of primary school, felt that *Newsround* could be more challenging for its audience:

> *"I think it does [do a good job], but I still think there can be more. This sounds wrong, but I relate to adult news because it has more information" (Christopher, Bournemouth, Yr 6).*

■ *Nations*

Particularly during the video diaries, but to a lesser extent in the group activities, it emerged that most respondents wanted *Newsround* to include more news from the different nations. Interestingly, while such sentiments were voiced in all four nations, it was most strongly articulated in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is a politically sensitive region, with contested national identities, whose current political consensus (with its new power-sharing Assembly), is still not entirely accepted by all groups in the population. Children are likely to be aware of this and to seek reassurance through programmes like *Newsround*. However, our Northern Irish participants were particularly adamant to have more local news. As one student said:

> *"It's [*Newsround*]not always local enough, because it's fine with gender and age, but we are a small country and we don't get paid much attention to" (Eliza, Coleraine, Year 5)*

Some suggested that precisely because they are a small country doesn't mean that they should be overlooked by *Newsround*:

"I don't think Newsround *covers enough stories on Northern Ireland, and I know there are less people here, but that doesn't mean it's not as important" (Caitlin, Coleraine, Yr 7).*

Nearly all of the participants from Mill Strand Primary School made mention of the importance of including more news from different UK nations their video diaries. Secondary school participants at Dominican College tended to agree with this point, but they did not generally assign the same kind of urgency to *Newsround* addressing this concern.

There were very similar findings about the need for more news from Scotland. A typical view on this point is exemplified by Grant's statement:

"They don't really do enough for Glasgow. There is a BBC in Glasgow, but the last time I saw a story was at the airport when the guy tried to bomb it. They also cover knife crime of people my age." (Glasgow, Yr 9)

In Cardiff, Lucy (Yr 10) stated that Welsh stories and viewpoints are seldom included on *Newsround* and, as such, Welsh children's voices are rarely heard on the programme or on the website:

"… if there's a good story, they'll go to Wales, but in general they won't ask Welsh children[for their views]"

Even in Bournemouth, where their geographical proximity to London, where *Newsround* is produced might suggest that local news might not be much of an issue, a number of participants thought that *Newsround* could do a better job including content from their area. Melina (Yr 5) for instance, felt that local news would provide information children and parents needed to alert them to any dangers in the area:

"Yes because I like to hear about the local news to be safe and I like to hear about the animals"

Matthew (Yr 8) seemed somewhat conflicted about the need for more news local news. When asked if *Newsround* did a good job representing the Bournemouth area, he said:

"No, not really, because there isn't anything that really happens in Bournemouth, and I find that there is a lack of coverage, and there are important things that don't get covered."

The desire for additional news from the nations comes as no surprise, as theorists as early as the mid 1960s have recognized that 'cultural proximity' matters to news audiences, who would rather monitor news in their nation than from distant ones (Galtung and Ruge 1965; see also Allan, 2004). Being a UK-wide news programme poses some problems for *Newsround* in terms of representing all four nations. The cultural diversity of the UK poses news service providers with a number of challenges. While we recognise the difficulties associated with representing such cultural diversity, it is a fair point that children in the different nations should have the right to see more of themselves and their communities represented on *Newsround*.

■ *Gender and Class*

Interestingly, while age and national identities played a strong role in children's responses, neither gender nor class was mentioned as an important factor in the discussions and video diaries. This is partly because we were particularly interested in three key issues: Citizenship; Interactivity and Content – and we directed the children to focus on these. The instructions for the video diary stated: 'Does *Newsround* do a good job covering stories that matter to people like you (people with your interests, background, in your nation, in your community, your gender, and your age)? Please explain.

Firstly, with regard to gender, the evidence from the questionnaires suggests that there are not substantive differences between the way that boys and girls in *Newsround's* target audience of 8-12 year olds consider the news. Given Newsround's focus on involving both boys and girls in its coverage of stories and as Press Packers, as well as the gender balance of its presenters, gender would not have been a noticeable issues for these children – who generally approved of how the bulletin is currently presented. *Newsround*'s focus on the younger age group was of more concern. There is evidence that 'age' is a powerful concept for children in discussing their sense of identity and in differentiating themselves from other children (see Messenger Davies, 2001).

Secondly, we did not ask about class specifically (though we implied it by asking about their communities). Had we focused specifically in our questions on issues such as 'poverty' or

'inequality' more might have been said about class. It seems likely that the children were so interested and concerned with the national and age disparity, that other issues had less salience. There is also evidence from our study (see the children's definitions of news) that children's choice of topics is influenced by the kinds of agenda-setting that professional news-gatherers provide. Salient topics mentioned by children (see Table 2) are clearly drawn from their experience of broadcast news: 'what's going on in the world'; 'murders'; 'weather' and so on. Our research does not provide evidence either way that *Newsround* is in touch with the needs of children of all classes, and we suggest that there is a need for more focused research on this topic.

CHILDREN *over the age of 12 feel they have outgrown* Newsround *but are not quite ready for adult news*

While we recognize that *Newsround* is aimed at children up to the age of 12, we still felt it was important to speak to teenagers (up to age 15) about their thoughts on *Newsround*. As might be expected, teenagers overwhelmingly stated that they had outgrown *Newsround* and that it did not cover stories that mattered to people like them. Holly from Cardiff summed up this feeling well:

> *"They cover many interesting stories, but not for our age group because none of my friends watch it and nor do I. They don't really focus on our age group, it's the younger ones" (Year 9)*

While many of our teenage respondents were well aware of the fact that *Newsround* was not aimed at their age group, several had a number of interesting suggestions for the development of a news service for teenage audiences. As Lucy from Cardiff noted:

> *"*Newsround *doesn't make me feel my ideas are important, as it's not for my age group. It would be good to have a range of different opinions from different age groups. For example, 7-10, 11-13, and 14-17. I do feel stories are based on a younger audience" (Year 10)*

Tessa from Bournemouth also added:

> *"All the press packers and who share their views are younger. 12 was about the highest, and I am almost 14, and it's not for people who are older. I wouldn't watch it now, because it's not based for me. Which is fine, but I wish there was a news programme based for teens like* Teenround*" (Year 8)*

While we are not suggesting that *Newsround* ought to include news for teenagers, our research seems to clearly demonstrate that this audience might welcome the development of a news service that would directly address young people's interests, concerns and political development.[9]

Many teenagers also indicated that they had no desire to interact with *Newsround*, nor contact anyone working there:

> *"Overall it was easy to get in touch, as they showed the website on almost every program. And they have quizzes and give the texting number. But, I didn't really have the urge to go and get in touch because it doesn't sound that appealing" (Tessa, Bournemouth, Year 8)*

Once again, this relates in part to the fact that *Newsround*'s mandate only goes as far as age 12, meaning that some of the older children and teenagers, realising that the programme is not for them, lose their incentive to become involved with it.

This point links back to the fact that there are currently few public spaces specifically designed for teenagers where they are able to express themselves as citizens, engage in knowledge sharing, and learn about the world around them. If they are not provided with a news service that focuses exclusively on their needs, interests and political development, there is a sizeable, important demographic group unaccounted for. Additionally, if there is public agreement that the news plays an important role in democratic society, then the earlier we encourage young people to engage with it the better. They will not spontaneously become politically engaged once they reach 18, as these qualities must be embedded into their daily lives at an early age. While *Newsround* plays that important role for children aged 8-12, we are perhaps

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[9] It should be noted that we acknowledge BBC *Switch's* work in developing factual content for teenagers, although it is not comparable with the daily news service provided by *Newsround*.

unintentionally marginalising teenagers and risk losing them as young citizens by expecting them to jump straight to 'adult' news.

In an era of seemingly unlimited information, argues Moeller (2009), there is clearly an urgent need for citizens to become more 'news literate'. As far as children are concerned, they "must learn not just how to surf, link, load and click, but how to ask, judge and think to understand our world." In her view, the development of greater 'news literacy' would allow all citizens, including children, to become more active and critical participants in civic life. "The goal of news literacy, and its most modern form, digital literacy," she concludes, "is to give people the knowledge to decipher the messages they receive and to give them the power to use their rights of free expression to defend their access to information, to secure their participation in the process of governing, to help all voices be heard." If all voices are to be heard, there is an obvious need to provide news services for all young citizens and not just those who are now catered to through *Newsround*.

5. Conclusions

The symbiotic relationship between news production and active citizenship is widely regarded as central to the health of democratic societies. Do news organisations in the UK view children as citizens or, at the very least, as 'citizens in the making' (Buckingham, 2000)? If so, why is it that children have so few news outlets that directly address them and their interests and concerns? If journalists are reluctant to see children as citizens, might there be implications for their eventual participation as adults in the years ahead? (Carter and Allan, 2005a, 2005b; Cushion, 2006; Mendes, Carter and Messenger Davies, 2009).

In light of the importance of this issue, our team of academic researchers and BBC partners examined children's relationship to *Newsround* in order to address how it engages with them as citizens.

In speaking to children and young people from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, we attempted to examine how *Newsround* currently fosters citizenship amongst young people, and how it might improve in this regard. Overall, most of our respondents claimed that they had ideas about important events and issues in society and craved an outlet in which to share them, refuting common accusations that they are 'politically disengaged.' Most articulated interest in a variety of political issues including the environment, transport, health and education. It is perhaps understandable then, given their interest in such issues, that many felt frustrated that there are so few public spaces where children are welcome to express their opinions and make a contribution to social change.

For many, *Newsround* is the only news outlet which encourages and fosters their interests and opinions on issues affecting their lives. It seems, in general, that the programme is effectively engaging its target audience (8-12 year olds), providing them with a space in which they feel their ideas are represented and made to feel important. This confidence building is consequential if we are to expect today's youth to be active citizens of the future.

Nevertheless, *Newsround* needs to improve in some important ways:

■ The first area relates to the provision of news from the nations, where many of our respondents noted that the programme focused too heavily on England, particularly London.

■ A second issue many of the children we spoke to raised is that they want the programme to continue to use children's voices as much as possible on the television bulletin and on the website. Additionally, some firmly believed that *Newsround* ought to increase the contributions of children overall, as news producers and presenters.

■ Thirdly, *Newsround*'s target audience, together with the transitional / younger teenager audience, have significant and interesting contributions to make to our understanding of their citizenship and how it might be encouraged through more engaging and innovative media formats, contents and scheduling. Because this latter audience currently has no alternative to either *Newsround* or adult news, their views, concerns and political engagement suffer.

In the final section of this report, we offer a number of recommendations coming out of the quantitative and qualitative data for the BBC to consider as the basis for improving its provision of news and current affairs for children across the age ranges. It is our hope that these recommendations might provide the basis for ongoing discussions within the BBC on the issues raised here.

6. Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS
arising from the questionnaire data

◆◆◆ *News and Citizenship*

■ Producers working with children and young people should be encouraged to question their own assumptions about how children relate to the news.

■ Local issues (especially those linked to nation) are important to children and should be reflected across children's factual programming.

■ Citizenship issues are obviously linked to news consumption and production. However, it should be borne in mind that in three of the four nations in our study, citizenship and national identity are often contested, with many children defining themselves as Welsh, Scottish or, in the case of Northern Ireland, in three different ways (Irish, Northern Irish and British). It would be useful to explore these issues further in the context of ethnic and other cultural identities. This was not possible in the present small-scale, pilot study.

■ Given that participants in our study mentioned 81 different types of 'enjoyable' news topics, professional news agendas should not be too wary of presenting children with hard news stories.

■ Many of the children in our study were not only concerned that stories about children in adult news routinely feature children when they are in trouble, but also that in reporting such stories journalists rarely ask children for their opinions. Some suggested, therefore, that it was vital that *Newsround* cover the same stories and actively encourage children's comments. A related point some mentioned was that *Newsround* ought to cover a wide variety of stories about the lives of children from around the UK.

◆◆◆ *Favourite Places for News*

■ Given the fact that two thirds of the children in our study mentioned television as their 'favourite place for news', *Newsround*'s television bulletin should remain a central delivery platform, supported by a website that continues to extend its range of news coverage and increase audience interactivity.

■ *Newsround* was watched regularly (at least once a week) by over 95% of the whole sample. Appropriate broadcast news should also be offer to older children – i.e. 12-15 years olds, since there was no age difference in preference for news on television between the younger and older children.

■ Consideration should be given to the children's suggestions for making the website more attractive and a logical extension of watching the programme. Visiting the *Newsround* website was much less popular than watching the broadcast, but it was also true that it was the younger children who were more likely than the older ones to visit the website 'most days'.[10]

■ Given that our sample indicates that children in its target audience of 8-12 year olds are not frequent users of various forms of interactive technology, especially technology which involved uploading information to the website ('citizen journalism'), more thought could be given to educating children about these possibilities through the broadcast programme and the website. Consideration should also be given to regularly eliciting children's ideas as to which forms of interactivity they would be the most likely to use on different media platforms.

[10] See Thorsen, Allan and Carter (2009) for a discussion about the development of *Newsround's* website from its relaunch in 2001.

■ Given that there were no significant gender differences in viewing *Newsround*, but that girls were more likely than boys to say that they visited the website, producers should be confident about producing material for both sexes on both media platforms (broadcast and website).

■ The journalistic cliché that hard news is for men and soft issues are for women, is put into question by our finding that, for these children, 'Mum' is the person in the household most interested in news. This could be borne in mind when casting presenters and other adults featured on *Newsround*. It is a point that clearly warrants further research in relation to children's news.

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RECOMMENDATIONS
arising from the video diaries and classroom based activities

■ More attention needs to be paid to local issues in all four nations which comprise the UK. One recommendation frequently offered by children in our study was to have specific sections on the website for news from each nation. Some suggested a prominently placed clickable map of the UK to facilitate this process.

■ *Newsround* producers should consider how they might include a wider range of accents for presenters, reporters and amongst those who are interviewed.

■ *Newsround* should continue to use the message boards, contact us and press pack as a ways of interacting with young people. With regard to television, more attempts should be made to use the red button (games, quizzes, more information) as a form of interacting with the programme.

■ *Newsround* needs to ensure that traditional methods of communication (phone, letters) are still available, as many children in the target audience of 8-12 year olds' use of computers and the internet is often restricted at home and at school.

■ Children from about the age of 12 tend to feel that they have outgrown *Newsround,* yet many are of the view that they are not quite ready for adult news. A significant number of older children strongly supported the development of a dedicated news provision for the young teenager audience.

■ *Newsround* should maintain its priority of allowing children to speak for themselves where possible. Young people very much appreciated seeing themselves represented on this programme. They would welcome increased use of children as reporters and in interviews.

■ Children indicated that *Newsround* represents a unique and important space where their ideas and opinions are seen to be important. As such, *Newsround* should ensure that its news provision supports and also challenges young people in their development as young citizens. Producers should not avoid addressing a wide range of political, social, economic and personal issues, as they can always be addressed in ways that are relevant and appropriate to the child audience.

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8. Appendix: demographics

Table 33: Proportions of Pupils in Each School

	Freq.	%
Valid		
Dominican NI	32	14.6
Bournemouth Secondary	31	14.2
Radnor Primary	29	13.2
Bournemouth Primary	28	12.8
Hillhead High	27	12.3
Hillhead Primary	26	11.9
Millstrand NI	23	10.5
Llanishen High	23	10.5
Total	219	100

Table 33 shows that the proportion of children in each school was reasonably evenly spread across the four nations. There are higher proportions of children in the secondary schools (Dominican College, Bournemouth School for Boys and Bournemouth School for Girls, Hillhead High and Llanishen High) because we used more class groups in these schools.

Table 34: Breakdown of Age Groups

	Freq.	%
Valid		
Age 9	44	20.1
Age 14	37	16.9
Age 10	35	16
Age 12	35	16
Age 13	35	16
Age 8	16	7.3
Age 11	12	5.5
Age 15	5	2.3
Total	219	100

Table 34 shows the distribution of age groups in the sample. Our sample target for age was from age 8 to 15 years, but because of the time of year we interviewed the children, (the Spring, i.e. towards the end of the school year) and the fact that we were using class groups, many '8 year olds' had turned 9, and many '13 year olds' had turned 14 by the time we met them. Hence the higher proportions of 9 and 14 year olds. A very small number of children (2.3%) had turned 15 when we met them. Table 35 below further illustrates the breakdown across class groups and shows the proportions of children in each year group.

Table 35: Class Year Groups

	Freq.	%
Valid		
Year 8	44	20.1
Year 5	40	18.3
Year 9	38	17.4
Year 6	37	16.9
Year 10	31	14.2
Year 4	29	13.2
Total	219	100

Table 36: Breakdown by Gender

	Freq.	%
Valid		
Boy	113	51.6
Girl	106	48.4
Total	219	100

Table 36 shows that our gender balance was nearly evenly distributed with slightly more boys (51.6%) than girls (48.4%).

Table 37: Breakdown by Town of Residence

	Freq.	%
Valid		
Bournemouth	59	27.1
Coleraine	54	24.8
Glasgow	53	24.3
Cardiff	52	23.9
Total	218	100
Missing		
99.00	1	.5
Total	219	100

Table 37 shows the distribution of children according to the town (i.e. the educational district) in which they were at school. Coleraine in Northern Ireland is the educational district to which Portrush (Dominican College) and Portstewart (Millstrand Integrated Primary) belonged. Llanishen High and Radnor Road Primary are in Cardiff. The Hillhead schools are in Glasgow. The two Bournemouth high schools are Bournemouth School for Boys and Bournemouth School for girls, and the primary is St Mark's.

Arts and Humanities Research Council

Each year the AHRC provides approximately £100 million from the Government to support research and postgraduate study in the arts and humanities. In any one year, the AHRC makes approximately 700 research awards and around 1,000 postgraduate awards. Awards are made after a rigorous peer review process, to ensure that only applications of the highest quality are funded. Arts and humanities researchers constitute nearly a quarter of all research-active staff in the higher education sector. The quality and range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK. www.ahrc.ac.uk

BBC Future Media and Technology

BBC Future Media & Technology focuses on what comes next for the BBC in terms of technology and services. The department concentrates on innovative platforms and content and is involved in the development of search, navigation, metadata, on-demand, mobile and web based applications including the emerging BBC i-Player on demand service and Web 2.0 initiatives, as well as the BBC Open Archive. FM&T aims to keep the Corporation on the cutting edge of the industry at a time where the boundaries between producers and audiences are fast disappearing and the entire landscape of the large scale broadcaster is changing dramatically.

AHRC/BBC *Knowledge Exchange*

The AHRC/BBC Knowledge Exchange Programme is led from within the BBC by the Innovation Culture team. Innovation Culture provides a central support resource for a wide range of BBC divisions, making it more effective to undertake collaborative work. It forges partnerships outside the BBC as well as

internally enabling the transfer of ideas, knowledge and prototypes into the business. By encouraging best practice across the whole of the BBC's Future Media and Technology (FM&T) division, of which BBC Research and Innovation is part, the team brings a strategic overview to a range of innovation techniques. It also drives forward a variety of early stage research projects in key strategic areas, bringing a user centered design approach to emerging technology practice.

Blog

The Blog is the place to go for any new announcements, outputs, musings from the KEP team. There will also be posts from project partners involved with the current round of funded projects.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/knowledgeexchange

BEEBAC

beebac is the online knowledge network for the BBC and academic community . It is a place to find likeminded individuals and a resource for ideas, projects and people. It enables you to find people and projects you want to be involved with, explore areas of mutual interest and exchange ideas and resources.

http://beebac.welcomebackstage.com

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Asking children what *they* want to *improve* children's news