

participants aged 34 or under and the remainder 35 and over. A range of English regions were represented; however, the sample did not fully reflect the devolved nations, with only 2 Scottish, 1 Irish, and no Welsh participants. Nor was the sample representative in terms of educational level: participants were highly educated, with 35 out of the 46 participants having at least an undergraduate degree.⁶

In deliberative events, the priority is to ensure that participants mix with other people who have a range of views about the topic at hand. In light of this, we ensured that the breakout groups comprised a mix of participants of different ages, ethnicities and regional locations, so that different perspectives were presented, discussed, and reflected upon by participants, including novel perspectives from other group members that they had not necessarily come across before.

⁶ While we recognise the importance of the devolved nations' perspectives, we were not able to structure the sample by region through the BL service. The results do indicate a widespread recognition of the importance of all the UK's regions as stakeholders in public service media. Nonetheless, for more detailed insights into their specific standpoints, we would advocate carrying out either a similar event in each of the devolved nations, or creating an event ensuring regional and national diversity is adequately represented. In addition, it should be borne in mind that this sample is highly educated and the depth and reflexivity of the discussions may reflect this.

Findings

The combined methods of deliberation, voting and Q sort interviews revealed a complex picture of how the public think about public service broadcasting. The findings can be summarised as follows:

1. Participants set some clear priorities for the future of public service broadcasting, but differed in their views of the relative importance of different elements;
2. The recommendations indicated a clear priority for an independent public service media.
3. Some issues that attracted significant discussion (e.g. the licence fee) received a relatively low rating in the recommendations and the Q sorts; this is most likely to be because they are too complex for a single recommendation to be feasible, rather than because they are unimportant;
4. The quality of the discussions showed that, given enough information and opportunity to discuss, participants were very capable of discussing the complexities of public service provision, and establishing a view on what aspects of that provision were most important;
5. During the discussions, participants started to recognise the connections and tensions between different aspects of public service broadcasting provision, through their engagement with different perspectives in the group;
6. The deliberative approach offers an important tool for engaging with the public on issues beyond their consumption of content and which relate more to the impact of public service broadcasting on their citizenship and social, cultural and political lives.

Some caveats for the findings should be borne in mind:

- The specificity of recommendations and Q sort statements may affect their ranking: more general statements may receive a higher ranking because they are easier to agree with.
- While our previous research shows that a more varied group of participants is as capable of engaging in complex discussion as the participants in this study, nonetheless some recommendations may be influenced by the level of education of the participants (e.g. the very high-ranked recommendation to protect scientific and educational programming).
- The research is qualitative, and should be taken as indicative, rather than representative, of thinking among the wider public.

Reflecting the goals of deliberation, the discussions showed that participants engaged deeply and in detail with the complexities of delivering public service media and the challenges it faced for its future. Because of the way the sessions were structured, the discussions went beyond content priorities (which have been effectively identified through previous Ofcom research) to also include issues relating to universality and access, regulation, funding, diversity and accountability. As the discussions progressed, participants started to explore the links between different aspects of public service media, and engage with the complexity of the debate about its future.

Recommendations

Participants generated 48 recommendations and voted on their importance for the future of public service broadcasting in a fourth and final session. The vote was held separately in order to give participants time to reflect on the ideas and priorities they had discussed.

The full results of the voting are shown in Appendix 4. The **most well supported** recommendation is to maintain the independence of public service media from government. 36 of the 45 votes were on the top scale point of 7 (extremely important). The following recommendations also attracted significant support, being ranked above 6:

1. Protect scientific and educational programming
2. Ensure enough diversity of perspectives to ensure the public can make informed decisions / take an informed perspective about an issue
3. Prioritise accuracy and detail over speed of news
4. Ensure public service content can be accessed across different platforms and is easy to find (e.g., better cataloguing, using up-to-date technologies)
5. Diversify people who work in commissioning to promote new ideas and more creative decision making
6. Place greater emphasis on accuracy, trustworthiness and truth, rather than simply seeking to balance opposing views
7. Protect cultural / arts programming
8. Review the relative importance of purposes and characteristics based on changing contexts (e.g. emphasise more the value of reliable news in an era of disinformation)

Meanwhile, the **least well supported** recommendation, by a significant margin, was to abolish the licence fee. 29 out of 45 votes were on the bottom half of the scale for this item. As we discuss below, the lower ranking given to items relating to funding does not necessarily indicate they are unimportant, but is more likely to reflect the feeling that deciding how to fund public service media is a complex problem that is difficult to solve.

Taking the items that were rated as 5 or above⁷, we can identify the following priority clusters, (table 1):

1. **Diversity off screen.** This cluster includes items that relate to diversity off screen: having diverse people in decision-making position, ensuring diversity in the production process, giving new voices and minority groups a platform, and enhancing community participation.
2. **Diversity on screen.** This cluster includes items about diversity of opinion and different cultures being represented adequately on screen. Diverse representations can help audiences to become more informed and expose them to new experiences.
3. **Trusted news / journalism.** This cluster includes items that emphasize the importance of trusted journalism and prioritise the quality of news over other aspects, such as speed of reporting.
4. **Other valued content.** This cluster includes items that relate to the types of content that participants felt public service should protect, foster or prioritise in addition to trusted news and journalism. This includes scientific and cultural programme, arts programming, children's programming, and local news.

⁷ 5 was chosen as the cut off point because it indicates the top half of the scale, and was also the point at which distributions clearly skewed towards the positive end of the scale.

5. **Universality and access.** This cluster emphasizes the importance of universal access, both in terms of an ability to access public service platforms and for events of national significance to be available on these platforms.
6. **Independence and accountability.** This cluster includes items that emphasize the independence of public service from government, and the importance of public service being owned by and accountable to the public.
7. **Regulation.** This cluster contains items about how to regulate public service media, such as reviewing the public service purposes in a changing context, expecting high standards of data protection, and introducing ethical standards for advertisers on public service.
8. **Funding.** This cluster contains items related to ownership and funding. They address the structure of the licence fee and the method of enforcement, but were exceptional insofar as most of the ideas relating to licensing were ranked below the cut-off point.

Table 1: Recommendation priority clusters

<p>Diversity off screen</p> <p>Diversify people who work in commissioning to promote new ideas and more creative decision making (6.1)</p> <p>Ensure diversity in production staff and production companies / locations to ensure output is diverse and avoid London-centric perspectives (5.9)</p> <p>Enhance community content and participation (e.g. utilising digital technologies to enable contributions from local communities across the UK) (5.4)</p>
<p>Diversity on screen</p> <p>Ensure enough diversity of perspectives to ensure the public can make informed decisions / take an informed perspective about an issue (6.2)</p> <p>Recommend and expose audiences to diverse content that goes beyond their existing habits and preferences (5.9)</p> <p>Seek out new voices, including youth and people from minority communities, and give them a platform within the PS system (5.8)</p> <p>Emphasise on-screen diversity more (5.6)</p> <p>Rather than try to achieve balance in particular programmes (e.g., documentaries), allow stronger views that reflect current debates, but seek diversity across the whole PSB output (5.5)</p> <p>Incorporate diversity into all programme offerings instead of singling out (i.e. a specific ethnic group in one programme) (5.4)</p>
<p>Trusted news / journalism</p> <p>Prioritise accuracy and detail over speed of news (6.1)</p> <p>Place greater emphasis on accuracy, trustworthiness and truth, rather than simply seeking to balance opposing views (6.1)</p> <p>Focus on gaining public trust rather than on competing with other media outlets (5.7)</p> <p>Place greater emphasis on investigative journalism (5.6)</p>
<p>Other valued content</p> <p>Protect scientific and educational programming (6.4)</p> <p>Protect cultural / arts programming (6)</p> <p>Protect children’s programming (5.8)</p> <p>Protect local content, including news coverage (5.7)</p> <p>Avoid ‘easy’, lower quality or repetitive formats that have no ability to make the viewer ‘think’ and replace with better quality shows (e.g. hard-hitting, in-depth programmes about complex issues or other parts of the world) (5.6)</p> <p>Produce media that is widely consumed and shared and can facilitate conversation among audiences and build communities (5.6)</p> <p>Place greater emphasis on taking risks, being innovative, and generating new and ground-breaking content (5.4)</p> <p>Focus on what commercial media cannot do (e.g. deliver local programming, educational content, reliable news and current affairs) and leave other areas to the market (e.g. entertainment programmes) (5.1)</p>
<p>Universality and access</p> <p>Ensure public service content can be accessed across different platforms and is easy to find (e.g., better cataloguing, using up-to-date technologies) (6.1)</p> <p>Ensure events with national significance are programmed on non-subscription, free-to-air media (5.9)</p>
<p>Independence and accountability</p> <p>Maintain the BBC’s independence from government (6.5)</p> <p>Democratise public service by increasing transparency, accountability, giving the public a stronger voice in decision making (e.g., survey of licence-fee payers, allowing licence-fee payers to vote for boards, feedback mechanisms for content/programming) (5.8)</p> <p>Maintain public service media that are owned publicly and not influenced by private media owners (5.6)</p>
<p>Funding</p> <p>Make the licence fee scaled (progressive) by not charging those less able to pay (means-testing) and charging more to those who can afford it (5.3)</p> <p>Measures to enforce licence fee (e.g., threatening letters) should be relaxed (5.2)</p>
<p>Regulation</p> <p>Review the relative importance of purposes and characteristics based on changing contexts (e.g. emphasise more the value of reliable news in an era of disinformation) (6)</p> <p>Expect higher standards of data protection from public service media as compared to other media organisations (5.6)</p> <p>Introduce ethical standards for advertisers on public service media (5.6)</p> <p>Remove the idea of a single UK cultural identity from the purposes and characteristics – UK cultural identity is represented through diversity (5.5)</p>

Deliberative discussions

The recommendations are a central outcome of the Citizens' Assembly. Taken in isolation, however, they cannot reflect the complexity of the discussions that preceded them. The discussions that participants engage in before they decide on recommendations are fundamental to deliberation and to the Citizens' Assembly process, since they facilitate reflection on new ideas and perspectives, helping participants to both learn about the issue at hand and to come to more considered and informed conclusions. The aim of deliberative discussions is not necessarily to come to agreement on an issue, although that might happen, but to reach a point where people are able to understand the range of perspectives relating to an issue and take them into account when drawing their own conclusions. By looking at the content of discussions within groups, we can learn more about our participants' thinking about the recommendations and what issues might require further public discussion and engagement.

The content of the discussions across groups shows that recommendations differ significantly in the volume of debate they generated. Some recommendations are seemingly agreed upon without the need for discussion. One example is ensuring public service content can be accessed across different platforms and is easy to find. In terms of votes, this was one of the most well-supported outcomes of the Citizens' Assembly, but it was not considered at length in the discussions. This may reflect widespread agreement that such a goal is worthwhile and attainable.

Other issues generated much longer discussions, reflecting their complexity, disagreements and/or uncertainties about how best to proceed. In this section, we illustrate this kind of deliberation, using the two examples of funding and diversity. These topics prompted exchanges of views, disagreements, and reflective contributions. They show how participants engaged with the inevitable tensions and trade-offs that are involved in decisions about the future of PSB, even, at times, offering ideas about how to resolve them.

Funding

The discussions about funding showed a high level of awareness of the tensions that characterise debates about paying for public service broadcasting. In fact, one might go so far as to say that funding itself is a vector for many of the tensions that characterise public service broadcasting per se, in a context where civic obligations exist alongside market pressures, and where audiences self-define as consumers as well as citizens.

For many participants, paying the licence fee entitled them to a genuine influence on how public service media was managed and delivered. As one participant said:

P3G1⁸: If we're relying on [the BBC], and we're wanting to protect and preserve, I think we need in turn to be reliable – to help them with secure funding, independent funding. [...] Independent [and] within that, responsive to people's input [...] People want to be heard, want to be seen, people want to be included, but not just to be fobbed off [...] there needs to be a taking on board, a visible, clear, reportable and transparent taking on board. If the public service broadcasters don't actually follow what the majority of people say, they need to explain why they do not and explain themselves, so people do feel actually heard.

⁸ P = participant number within their group; G = breakout group number

P3G6: I would be in favour of keeping the licence fee, however, I thought one of the groups came up with a brilliant idea and that is having, allowing the public more of a say in what is produced and I like the idea of they talked about, you know, repeated surveys and repeated, like market research or something into, you know, what the current UK public wants and also, you know, maybe some ratings on how the public service broadcasters are doing. I certainly think that there can be more involvement with, from the public. I, you know, if we're paying for it we should legitimately have a say in what goes on.

This sense of entitlement drew on participants' citizen and consumer identities, without participants seeing any apparent contradiction between the two. On the one hand, the fact that the public funded the BBC justified their demands for a public-oriented service that could serve collective interests, just as other public services do.

P1G5: For example, like council tax —We wanted to get the council to know what exactly, exactly we wanted to improve on in a certain area in the borough and things like that. So I think we, you know, in terms of consultation, or things like that, I think, could be strengthened in a way, if [the licence fee] should be existing as it is.

On the other, the licence fee was perceived as a parallel to market exchanges, where a fee is paid in return for a desirable, clearly defined and individually-delivered product or service.

P2G1: I think, in having a licence fee, viewers should definitely have more say. Especially if you're paying for something you should definitely have a platform to give your opinion.

Some participants did not agree with the way the licence fee seemed to be spent, particularly when commercial priorities seemed to dominate decisions. In group 8, this discussion revolved around the pay for 'celebrity' presenters.

P3G8: Well, I think, for instance Gary Lineker, he's on Match of the Day. We're paying, we're all paying the licence fee. And then some, someone on a political program, for instance, who's hosting it through the same amount of time, they're getting 10 times less so I'm thinking well, they should both be getting the same amount of pay because they're doing the same job and we are paying for it. But it's because Match of the Day is more popular—and there's probably viewing figures—and that's why they get more money.

A central issue that often precipitated debates about funding was the unpopularity of the licence fee; even those participants who paid it quite willingly felt a conflict between their rights as a consumer and their obligations as a citizen.

P1G5: [...] You know, I would consider myself as having a stable income and things and I don't want to pay [the licence fee], but I see that as a responsibility, or, you know, I respect the industry so that's why I pay for it, even though I don't switch on and watch it. I still have a TV here. So I'm still paying for it every single day. Yes, I see that as one of the things that a citizen would need to do and respect that.

Participants had mixed views about the degree to which the licence fee guaranteed broadcasting independence. While some felt that the government's involvement with setting the licence fee compromised independence, others felt the licence fee offered a basis for trusting the BBC.

P5G1: I think at the moment with the licence fee, they have become more tied to the government and kind of dependent on them and, and I think that there's been a lot of interference there.

P5G7: I think the licence fee, like how it is funded, to me personally is, is why I would trust [the BBC] more than other channels, um, so I think that's public service broadcasting, I would trust more because there aren't advertisers involved, um, it's not commercially funded. Whereas there's obviously more of a conflict for, for other providers, maybe.

The second participant seems clear that they trust the BBC more than channels dependent on advertising, yet the final caveat, 'maybe', suggests some uncertainty about their position. This might be a reflection of the fact that broadcasters do combine market-oriented behaviour into their operations. For some participants, this meant the opposition between 'public' and 'commercial' broadcasting was not straightforward.

P2G2: I was really shocked [...] when I realised that BBC World Service makes a huge amount of money. I thought, 'Oh, okay, so it's not just about the licence fee.' So where does that money go?

The following participant succinctly describes the reality of broadcasting practice, and notes the limits for public influence in this kind of 'hybrid' model of operation.

P3G5: They're public in the sense that they get public money, they've got some public, you know, duties and responsibilities. Otherwise, they're just run as a private entity, they make decisions without, you know, my input.

This hybridity is a reflection of the changing context for broadcasting and participants in group 4 in particular reflected on the relevance of the licence fee in a world very different from when it was first introduced.

P4G4: [...] one of the arguments in favour of the licence fee, going back in the day, was there was no other effective mechanism of capturing revenue from people who choose to watch TV or otherwise and in the modern world, the costs of doing that, I suspect to become relatively small... [...] So a TV licence made sense where you had no way of knowing what exactly people were watching. In the modern world where a lot of it is being streamed, you can actually know exactly what any one person is watching and you can charge them accordingly, and it seems to me that the technology is changing dramatically in that way and that does change options.

The challenges to the licence fee's legitimacy meant that as discussions progressed, many participants started to consider alternative models of funding. Some drew on knowledge about other sectors that also depend on public funding, such as the heritage sector, or tax regimes more generally; others drew on their experience of other public service media systems, using them to propose ideas that group members would subsequently debate. A topic that frequently arose was the potential to increase advertising as a source of funding. While participants understood that some broadcasters were already funded in this way, and that the BBC already used advertising in some of its international services, introducing more advertising into domestic BBC programming was often viewed as a threat to its trustworthiness and independence.

P3G6: I think the problem with letting advertisers in is that then you can no longer be neutral, you can no longer be unbiased, you can no longer be independent because, inevitably, the advertisers are going to have their own interests.

The following exchange shows how this kind of debate unfolded and, as this case shows, frequently led to other income sources being considered instead.

P5G5: [T]he advertising thing is what sort of puts up red flags for me because the idea of because well, what would advertising look like if it was, if say the BBC was going to raise revenue through advertising—What would that look like? And what would the adverts sort of be? And what implications would that have?

P2G5: See, I also worry about advertisers would then want to dictate what they're paying for.

P3G5: Or you could actually have some sort of guarantee where actually advertising isn't carried on certain platforms. So BBC America has advertising. BBC Online, when accessed outside of the UK, has a lot of advertising.

P5G5: Then what changes would you make?

P3G5: Well, you probably wouldn't make any changes, I think it'd be you know, in terms of funding, you get money from central government, you keep advertising on non-domestic, uh, platforms overseas, for example—You wouldn't have advertising on domestic output, for example, you know, Radio 1 and BBC. But if you were to watch, for example, BBC stuff overseas then you would have some sort of advertising. You'd have a privilege where Brits wouldn't be, wouldn't be subject to the advertising. But it's just a case of raising funds, right? A lot of a lot of those funds could be raised through other avenues—Selling, selling content, for example, or raising money from central government or cost saving or whatever. Advertising isn't the only option. As far as I'm concerned.

P4G5: You could sell their shows and raise funds that way [...] because once they start selling advertising, what then makes them different from any other channel?

Another alternative approach that many participants discussed was the idea of mixing a basic licence fee with optional payments for additional services. These ideas represented an attempt to resolve the tensions between the market-based, consumer-oriented provision of content, and a public, citizen-oriented service. One trade-off that could arise here is between the public service principle of delivering diverse content that caters to a wide range of audiences and can expand audience knowledge and horizons, and the consumer-oriented principle of paying based on demand and consumption. However, participants did not always make these connections across the different themes they touched on. Instead, a semi-tailored funding solution appeared as a logical compromise for the consumer/citizen and market/public service dualities that characterise public service broadcasting today.

P5G1: I think, if it has to change, and then the licence fees is removed and they have to find another way of funding it, I think the only other thing could be a subscription. But I don't know if that would bring in enough money, but I wouldn't want them to be [...] I wouldn't want them to have advertising as a way of funding it. I think there's far too much of that. I think that if, if they did have the licence fee revoked and they wouldn't, weren't allowed to, to have the Royal Charter or whatever, I think that, yeah, the subscription would be a better way of perhaps giving them a bit more autonomy—

hopefully—from the government and being able to, you know, not represent, to be less partial

P5G4: I think that perhaps there should, perhaps can be more flexibility in the licensing system so that would give more of options so that people can choose to pay for what they watch and perhaps there would be less cancellations of TV licences.

However, in practice, exactly how this would work was not straightforward, because of trade-offs between the availability of valued content and the market appeal it had.

P1G2: I suppose because we now subscribe to things like Netflix, we sort of, we see our licence in that sort of same way so that could be an option. Whereas before like you say, we didn't really think about it. You had a TV, you paid for it, and you just did it and you didn't really think. And now I suppose there is that option of, 'Well, if I'm paying for my Netflix, could I not jump around a bit more?' And I think as soon as that starts to happen, then you lose that one singular kind of thing that binds everyone together, I suppose.

P5G2: I never really even thought about adding a subscription for music—that seems ridiculous to me. As it should be free for everyone.

P6G2: I want to say when they start putting out content and shows like Black Mirror and Narcos, then we might talk about, you know, subscription. But you can't pay to watch Holby City and stuff like that. It's quite ridiculous.

Overall, the discussions showed clearly that participants themselves felt there was no straightforward answer to the question of how to fund public service broadcasting, a conclusion that is reflected in the low ranking of licence fee-related recommendations and the lack of a clear commitment to a licencing approach in the Q-sort results (see below). The following reflections from participants in group 5 illustrate this uncertainty.

P5G5: Yeah, um, I, I just been sort of back and forth on my opinion about the licensing fee. And so I thought it would benefit me because I'm confusing myself, it would benefit me to sort of discuss that, just because I can't really think of a, like a solution to it and that came up in the document that was sent around of people sort of being in favour of scrapping it. But I thought the idea of replacing it with advertisements wouldn't really sit right with me. So I just I don't really know about that and I want to hear, yeah, other opinions.

[...]

P1G5: Yeah, I think, you know, the problem of you know, you can literally abolish [the licence fee] but then I think, see, I think [P2G5], you actually mentioned a very good point—Who will pay for it? Like, is everyone willing to say, like, because it's not compulsory anymore does that mean that a lot of people would not pay for it or be generous enough to? Because that's around, you know, being generous, and, you know, how, to what extent are we being generous? And, you know, how would we ensure that it's a fair system for people who are affordable to pay or, like, yeah, more generous to pay? [...] And you can't forecast, in a way, because, you know, by having a fixed fee, you're able to forecast and you know how much you could spend per year, so that they could operate. But then without that, it's almost like when we have, you know, when COVID-19 hit, and then charities who rely on those, kind of generosity from people might struggle, because they their funding model is literally depending on how much people are willing to pay or like fundraising events or things like that, right? [...] So do

we want to see the public service to face similar issues that we have in in charities? So I'm not sure as well.

In the end, some participants felt that the licence fee, or an adaptation of it, was the best option available, even if it was not perfect.

P1G1: I can't see anything else working other than the licence fee, really, unless you had, someone suggested in the notes, splitting it up, so that you had half of it would at the educational end, maybe news programme and so on would be paid for by a licence fee, and then other things would be a subscription, like entertainment programmes. I think I would prefer to just carry on with the licence fee, since I cannot think of another way of doing. Advertising is a no, no for me. It's got to be licence fee unless someone else can come up with something better!

Diversity

Diversity was clearly an important theme and value for the participants in the Citizens' Assembly. Its importance was reflected in the high ranking for diversity items in the recommendations, as well as in the clear identification of diversity as an important issue for three of the four archetypal Q sorts (see below). In the discussions, diversity was associated most often with protected characteristics, such as ethnicity, disability, gender, race, and sexual orientation. But it also covered other aspects of difference that are under-represented, such as class and region.

The participants associated diversity with many other aspects of both public service delivery and audience engagement with PSBs. Rather than being an 'add-on' to the broad PSB remit of inform, educate, and entertain, participants suggested that diversity is fundamental to being able to deliver on all three of these areas. For example, diversity was connected to opportunities for PSBs to broadcast content that could educate audiences about different lives and experiences within the UK (marginalised communities or different areas of the UK), as well as different communities and cultures across the world. Educating audiences was thus implicitly associated with broadening their perspectives of their own society as well as the broader global environment.

P2G2: I was kind of glad of the opportunity to see those things—To kind of just see stuff I wouldn't normally see on issues that weren't necessarily issues I would experience in my life. [...] So I think there is a definitely a really important purpose for them to show everyone things they might not necessarily see.

Related to education, diversity on-screen was seen as an important way to normalise difference and fight stigma. For this to happen, diversity needed to be embedded across all types of programming, in high-profile roles as well as less prestigious locations, and not just treated as a 'niche' interest.

P4G7: So I guess I vote, like, say, see people with more disabilities more on TV— being more reflective. It can be diversity in terms of say different accents, as well— Just basically more fair representation of communities in the UK. And basically, I vote to fight stigmas, [...] And you'll fight that by showing the difference more, in terms of the representation.

P2G8: I think one of the big, certainly one of the big issues now is who's on the platform, you know? People of colour are not well-represented as, you know, kind of public personalities, broadcasters and I think that's part of diversity, of course, it's not just who's voice is heard but who is... who is reporting this. And I think that's a massive gap in pretty much all public broadcasters in many countries. It's who, who was there as the person reporting on or covering a certain topic or, or issue. Diversity is important from that perspective.

Some participants wanted to see more diversity on-screen because they felt it would better reflect British identity and the true nature of contemporary British society – although one participant felt that diversity was a disturbance to mainstream viewing and should be kept as a niche interest. Associating diversity with British identity did not mean that there was agreement about what being 'British' meant, and participants recognised the challenge of this public service goal, even when they did agree that representing a range of ways of being British and a range of perspectives on the world, through diversity, was important.

P4G4: I think one of the challenges of, one of the roles of public service broadcasting is to present the stuff that we might not necessarily choose for ourselves or which is, in some way, beneficial for us. But there is a question in a diverse British population, who decides what is good for us? You know, what I may like, is very different from what other people want.

Discussions about delivering diversity also highlighted tensions that arise from the coexistence of market and public service imperatives for public service broadcasters. For example, participants recognised that the BBC's international success was built on a very traditional view of 'Britishness' that limited diversity, even though it was commercially appealing.

P5G5: Because by virtue of our past being so popular on TV, we're excluding how, how we don't look like how we did in period dramas anymore - and that takes opportunities away from people who might be immigrants, so or second or third or fourth generation immigrants.

P1G5: I think they've got key brands, like if, let's say, we talked about, you know, things in London, things that are more sort of local, that might not be as attractive, because that's the stereotype that we have, you know, that's how people see British is, unfortunately. So I think that might create a bit of a tension, really, in terms of changing how people would see that because, you know, they're selling the Queen, they're selling like, the UK is very, you know, like posh. But is that real? Not really.

The following participant reflected on the importance of delivering on the public service remit, and the conflict that presented for arguments to personalise services, which could reduce diversity (and its associated advantages) for individual viewers.

P5G2: I think it should have kind of an educational role, and be different from other stations and providers in that they also offer like new things and new programs and new perspectives for people. So that's moving away from the personalisation and that sort of thing, to being more, um, diverse, I guess.

As well as diversity on-screen, participants emphasised the importance of diversity off-screen, in PSB institutions and in production industries. Diversity in creative roles was seen as a way to ensure that there would be more, and more authentic, representations of diversity on-screen.

Importantly, being transparent about efforts to increase diversity, and progress made, was crucial to both building trust in PSBs, as well as for encouraging diverse applicants in the long term.

P5G5: And I think increasing diversity would increase sort of social mobility, um, within the institution and decrease like nepotism and that would tackle the culture of like protecting sort of the old boys and the institution, um, which is how we get situations like Jimmy Savile and, like, pay inequality. Because there's so much just people protecting each other and, like, people being grandfathered in and stuff like that. So diversity would also like help to solve the problem in the first place.

The participants were measured and cautious in their view of how successfully diversity is currently represented in public service media. While the benefits of diversity were generally agreed-upon, tensions and trade-offs quickly became evident when participants began discussing the complexity of diversity-in-practice. In the following comments, participants in different groups highlighted the practical limitations of delivering diverse programming within the time available, and while also delivering to audience preferences:

P3G1: I don't quite know how you deal with that given UK has become more and more diverse over time so how do you manage to make sure that you don't miss out something, for example? You know, again, there's only so many hours in the day and there's only so much programming you can provide.

P6G7: I think similar to what [P5G7] said, I just, I think, based on the viewers of that channel, they, they can only be as diverse as their viewers allow. [...] Channel 4 has a much younger audience so they're able to do, [...] they're able to do more LGBTQ things whereas BBC may have that elder generation who may not want to see that, so may get more complaints if they were to produce a lot more of that content. So it kind of varies dependent on who watches.

One important tension that participants noted was between ensuring the presence of diverse groups on-screen, and ensuring that 'diversity' was of the kind that could enable positive outcomes. Participants pointed out that when diversity is instrumentalised as a way to appeal to a market, or positioned as a niche rather than a mainstream interest, its value was more limited. For example, while niche programming was one way of ensuring diversity was included on-screen, it also made it more difficult to reach a wider audience, and so opportunities to for informing and educating were missed, as the following exchange illustrates.

P2G3: I'm not sure that they should be channels targeted as specific because it kind of leads, does it lead, maybe I'm wrong, but it kind of leads to 'ghettoization' [...] it's not going to expand anybody's culture, it's less likely to expand people's culture [...]

P1G3: Yeah, I know, that's true.

P3G3: I agree. I think if you begin to compartmentalise different groups to these channels then, also you think, as well as what you said but also you lose the quality of the BBC and other channels in, somehow ending up on TV channels you would not necessarily watch just because of the channels they're on.

In mainstream programming, there was a danger of 'diverse' identities being persistently represented in stereotypical ways, which did little to fight stigma or challenge preconceptions. Here, participants articulated a tension between using diversity to appeal to and increase audiences, and being genuine about diversity improvements. When

diversity was simply a mechanism for branding, it was perceived to be inconsistent, short-term and opportunistic, rather than representing a more deep-seated change. Normalising diversity across all programming was generally seen as essential to making progress in ensuring diversity is ‘authentic’.

PIG7: So for example, we had like Mental Health Week or Black History Month and these things are sort of short term... things to recognise different types of people. But it might be nicer if it were something that was ongoing, so maybe on a soap there was somebody who had mental health issues throughout, it wasn't just a focus week, or there wasn't a Black family that came for a period of time— They were on it for a longer time. Just, and then perhaps just seeing that diversity throughout—in the news, behind the scenes—if it was something [...] consistently on TV it wouldn't be seen as so different.

Overall, the participant discussions showed that diversity is indispensable to realising the public service remit of public service broadcasting. Aside from generating powerful, high-quality and entertaining content, diversity enables broadcasters to inform and educate audiences about differences in society at a local, national and global level, reducing stigma and expanding audience horizons. These kinds of outcome were highly valued by the vast majority of our participants, who recognised the tensions that existed when implementing diversity, but were nonetheless enthusiastic in pointing out the kinds of diversity they wanted, recognising barriers, and proposing opportunities for improvement.

Themes such as funding and diversity emerge from the discussions as complex but particularly significant issues that necessitate further public discussion. Achieving meaningful dialogue with the public about these topics is clearly a difficult task, given the range of views, the complex arguments, and the tensions and trade-offs that have to be addressed. But the discussions across groups showed the importance of these contributions for the legitimacy of decisions made about the future of public service broadcasting. Arguably, the type of in-depth dialogue produced by this Assembly, where different considerations can be considered and reflected upon over time and in-depth, is a powerful way to address such issues adequately. Indeed, one participant in Group 4 suggested that ‘*maybe we should have more regular panels or citizens’ assemblies.*’ Another participant agreed: ‘*Yes, maybe citizens’ assemblies – maybe that could be a programme!*’.

Q sort results

As described above, the discussions were conducted in groups, and the recommendations were derived from the group discussions and were individually ranked. However, the Q sort interviews offered an opportunity for participants to consider their individual position on the relative importance of different ideas about public service media provision. Q method is a qualitative method designed to identify whether different groups of people share perspectives on a particular issue, and conducting the Q sorts in this project allowed us to identify whether there were sets of principles, or values, that differentiated our participants following their in-depth engagement with the issue.

31 statements were sorted by 28 participants on a scale of -4 (extremely unimportant) to +4 (extremely important), following the conclusion of the Citizens' Assembly. Participants were interviewed as they conducted their sorts, in order to identify the logic behind their choices. The 28 sorts generated four factors that illustrated different perspectives on the future of public service media, around which the participants converged, with low to moderate correlations across the factors (table 2).

The four factors accounted for 60% of the total variance in the sample. The first two factors dominated, accounting for most variance and most of the participants (see table 3). The four sorts reveal the diversity of views about public service media, as well as some ideas the participants viewed in a relatively similar way. While these results cannot be interpreted as the definitive perspectives of public service media held by a wider public, the strength of the two dominant perspectives does indicate that there is the potential for these positions to be reflected more broadly.

Table 2: Factor correlations

Factor	1	2	3	4
1	1	0.44	0.31	0.22
2	0.44	1	0.40	0.25
3	0.31	0.40	1	0.39
4	0.22	0.25	0.39	1

Table 3: Factor loadings and explained variance

Factor	1	2	3	4
Explained variance (%)	22	16	13	9
Participant loading	9	6	2	3

Three statements were rated similarly across all factors. These 'consensus statements' suggest the existence of principles that all can agree on, and are:

- Its programmes should cater to a wide range of interests, including specialist interests

- It should provide reliable and trustworthy news and investigative journalism
- It should deliver high-quality, original programmes, in terms of content and production standards

Beyond these, the different factors we identified were separated by the patterns of assignment of the statements by each group of people loading onto that factor, and by their distinguishing statements, whose placement in the grid was significantly different to other perspectives, at the $p=0.01$ or $p=0.05$ level. These statements are indicated in the grids below by a double asterisk (**: $p=0.01$) or a single asterisk (*: $p=0.05$)⁹.

Factor 1: Regulation and independence

In this factor, regulation, editorial independence and diversity receive the highest importance ratings, reflecting four of the eight recommendation clusters described above (diversity on screen and off screen, independence and accountability, and regulation). A concern with independent regulation, editorial independence, and accountability is evident in the three statements identified as most important from this perspective:

- (1) It should be regulated and regularly reviewed by an independent body;
- (2) It should be editorially independent and impartial, free of government or commercial influence;
- (3) Processes and practices of public service broadcasters should be transparent, to facilitate public accountability.

Statements emphasising the importance of diversity on- and off-screen are rated as important, and a valid focus for regulation, suggesting that diversity is regarded as an issue that is politically important. Less highly ranked are issues relating to funding, specific forms of content, community-building and quality and innovation.

The perspective is distinguished from the other factors by five statements, reflecting the overall pattern of priorities in the grid:

- It should be regulated and regularly reviewed by an independent body (*rated higher than all other factors*)
- It should be editorially independent and impartial, free of government or commercial influence (*rated higher than all other factors*)
- Regulation should include targets for diversity (e.g. of gender, ethnicity, age) in key areas (e.g. onscreen representation, senior production staff), for which broadcasters are held to account (*rated higher than all other factors*)
- Regulation should apply to any organisation that produces public service broadcasting-style content (*rated higher than all other factors*)
- It should broadcast programmes about topics that are not always popular, but are still important to our culture (e.g. topics in history, politics, religion, the arts) (*rated lower than all other factors*)

This perspective reflects a view that, despite changing media habits, broadcasting remains a powerful force in society. While libertarians may view regulation as undermining the independence of media, this perspective reflects the view that, without regulation in the public

⁹ Note that in the grids shown below, some statements have had to be abbreviated in the interests of readability.

interest, broadcasting would be biased in favour of powerful political and commercial interests. In this view, an important purpose of public service is to organise and regulate media in ways that maintain their independence and impartiality from powerful forces in society, while retaining their accountability to the public and ability to reflect the lives of the citizens they serve (Blumler 2016). Correspondingly, these participants are differentiated not only by the importance they place on media regulation and independence per se, but also by their feeling that regulation should apply to all media organisations generating relevant content, not only a few selected ones.

Factor 1: Regulation and independence

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
It should be self-funding through advertising or a monthly subscription	Its programmes should represent the UK to the world	It should commission its programmes mainly from UK media production companies	It should deliver local and regional programming	Its programmes should be available to everyone in the UK	Regulation should apply to any organisation that produces public service broadcasting-style content**	It should provide reliable and trustworthy news and investigative journalism	It should be editorially independent and impartial, free of government or commercial influence**	It should be regulated and regularly reviewed by an independent body **
	It should provide an alternative to purely commercial media	Regulation should only apply to a few organisations that are mainly responsible for public service broadcasting	It should broadcast events that bring the nation together (e.g. the Olympics, royal weddings, elections)	It should be innovative	Regulation should protect audiences by controlling the use of audience data by PSB companies and third parties	It should fairly represent a whole range of diversity, including gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and different UK communities	Processes and practices of public service broadcasters should be transparent	
		It should be funded by a compulsory licence fee	It should provide high-quality children's programmes	It should deliver high-quality, original programmes, in terms of content and production standards	It should provide citizens with enough information to understand and participate in political processes and debates about current events and issues	It should foster diversity in the production industries, including in key decision-making roles		
		It should broadcast a wide range of sports and leisure activities	It should broadcast programmes about topics that are not always popular, but are still important to our culture**	Its programmes should educate audiences by introducing them to new experiences and information, and challenging content	It should provide a platform for new voices (e.g. youth, minority communities)	Regulation should include targets for diversity (e.g. of gender, ethnicity, age) in key areas, for which broadcasters are held to account**		
			It should deliver popular programmes (e.g. reality TV, soaps)	The public should be able to influence decisions about how public service media operate	Its programmes should be easy to find and watch on a range of platforms and devices (e.g. websites, apps)			
				Its programmes should cater to a wide range of interests, including specialist interests				
				It should facilitate a sense of community among its audiences				

Factor 2: Diversity

The second perspective emphasises diversity and the range of content that public service media should broadcast. It is differentiated from the previous factor by the way in which diversity is more closely linked to the importance of offering a breadth of perspectives and information to audiences, both to broaden their own knowledge and to ensure they can participate in political debates. On the lower end of the importance scale are items relating to specific forms of content, to regulation, and to UK identity and community-building.

The distinguishing statements for this factor reflect these emphases. They are:

- It should broadcast programmes that are not always popular, but are still important to our culture (e.g. topics in history, politics, religion, the arts) (*rated higher than all other factors*)
- Regulation should include targets for diversity (e.g. of gender, ethnicity, age) in key areas (e.g. onscreen representation, senior production staff), for which broadcasters are held to account (*rated as higher than in factors 3 and 4, but lower than in factor 1*)
- It should provide high-quality children's programmes (*rated lower than all other factors*)
- It should deliver popular programmes (e.g. reality TV, soaps) (*rated lower than all other factors*)

This perspective reflects the fact that the idea of a singular, homogenous UK national culture was rejected strongly by many participants in the discussions. It emphasises instead a desire to ensure that the future of public service broadcasting must include a recognition of the importance of media as a vehicle for communicating pluralism and varied identities and experiences. While broadcasting today is not viewed as representing diversity adequately, whether on or off the screen (Ofcom, 2020), this perspective reinforces the argument that it has an important role to play in addressing imbalances and representing a wide range of diversity adequately (Saha 2018).

Factor 2: Diversity (note: some items are abbreviated in the interests of readability)

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
It should deliver popular programmes (e.g. reality TV, soaps)**	It should provide high-quality children's programmes**	Regulation should only apply to a few organisations that are mainly responsible for public service broadcasting	Its programmes should represent the UK to the world	It should facilitate a sense of community among its audiences	Regulation should protect audiences by controlling the use of audience data by PSB companies and third parties	It should provide a platform for new voices (e.g. youth, minority communities)	It should fairly represent a whole range of diversity, including gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and different UK communities	It should broadcast programmes about topics that are not always popular, but are still important **
	It should broadcast a wide range of sports and leisure activities	It should commission its programmes mainly from UK media production companies	It should be self-funding through advertising or a monthly subscription	The public should be able to influence decisions about how public service media operate	Regulation should include targets for diversity in key areas, for which broadcasters are held to account*	It should provide citizens with enough information to understand and participate in political processes and debates	It should provide reliable and trustworthy news and investigative journalism	
		Regulation should apply to any organisation that produces public service broadcasting-style content	Its programmes should be easy to find and watch on a range of platforms and devices (e.g. websites, apps)	It should be funded by a compulsory licence fee	It should be innovative	Processes and practices of public service broadcasters should be transparent		
		It should be regulated and regularly reviewed by an independent body	It should provide an alternative to purely commercial media	Its programmes should cater to a wide range of interests, including specialist interests	It should foster diversity in the production industries, including in key decision-making roles	Its programmes should educate audiences by introducing them to new experiences and information, and challenging content		
			It should broadcast events that bring the nation together (e.g. the Olympics, royal weddings, elections)	It should deliver local and regional programming	It should deliver high-quality, original programmes, in terms of content and production standards			
				Its programmes should be available to everyone in the UK				
				It should be editorially independent and impartial				

Factor 3: Limited regulation, but a comprehensive public service

The third perspective is distinguished by two strong patterns. First, these people place less importance on regulation than other groups. All the regulatory items are placed at the lower end of the scale, apart from one item that suggests there should be a limit to regulation ('Regulation should apply only to a few organisations that are mainly responsible for public service broadcasting'), which was placed at the neutral point. On the other hand, the items rated as most important reflect a range of priorities, suggesting that this group approached public service media with a more expansive set of expectations.

The highest-rated item emphasises universal access, but other items on the important end of the scale include an emphasis on diversity, breadth of programming and popular programmes, editorial independence and trustworthy news. The item emphasising the importance of broadcasts that bring the nation together is also rated highly in this perspective, suggesting that this outcome may be associated with programming that is broad and appealing enough to engage a wide range of people (a version of the 'hero' content identified in Ofcom's internal research). In contrast, this group places the lowest importance on having a public service media that can represent the UK to the world; for them, the priority is to serve the UK population.

The distinguishing statements in this factor reflected these patterns. They were:

- It should deliver popular programmes (e.g. reality TV, soaps) (*rated higher than all other factors*)
- Regulation should only apply to a few organisations that are mainly responsible for public service broadcasting (*rated higher than all other factors*)
- The public should be able to influence decisions about how public service media operate (*rated lower than all other factors*)
- Regulation should protect audiences by controlling the use of audience data by PSB companies and third parties (*rated lower than all other factors*)

While the pattern in this factor is relatively clear, and it accounts for 13% of the variance in the sample, it is worth noting that it accounted for the views of only two participants. This suggests that among the wider public, it may be a minority view.

Factor 3: Limited regulation, but a comprehensive public service

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
Its programmes should represent the UK to the world	It should be funded by a compulsory licence fee	It should provide an alternative to purely commercial media	It should facilitate a sense of community among its audiences	Its programmes should educate audiences by introducing them to new experiences and information, and challenging content	Its programmes should cater to a wide range of interests, including specialist interests	It should provide citizens with enough information to understand and participate in political processes and debates	It should provide reliable and trustworthy news and investigative journalism	Its programmes should be available to everyone in the UK
	Regulation should apply to any organisation that produces public service broadcasting-style content	It should broadcast a wide range of sports and leisure activities	Regulation should protect audiences by controlling the use of audience data by PSB companies and third parties *	Regulation should only apply to a few organisations that are mainly responsible for public service broadcasting *	It should be editorially independent and impartial	It should fairly represent a whole range of diversity, including gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and different UK communities	It should foster diversity in the production industries, including in key decision-making roles	
		It should be self-funding through advertising or a monthly subscription	Processes and practices of public service broadcasters should be transparent, to facilitate public accountability	It should be innovative	It should broadcast programmes about topics that are not always popular, but are still important to our culture	It should broadcast events that bring the nation together (e.g. the Olympics, royal weddings, elections)		
		The public should be able to influence decisions about how public service media operate **	It should be regulated and regularly reviewed by an independent body	It should commission its programmes mainly from UK media production companies	It should deliver popular programmes (e.g. reality TV, soaps) **	It should provide a platform for new voices (e.g. youth, minority communities)		
			Regulation should include targets for diversity in key areas, for which broadcasters are held to account	It should provide high-quality children's programmes	It should deliver local and regional programming			
				Its programmes should be easy to find and watch on a range of platforms and devices (e.g. websites, apps)				
				It should deliver high-quality, original programmes				

Factor 4: An accessible public service

Factor 4 is the least clear of the four perspectives identified. It does show some similarities with other perspectives. For example, as in factor 3, these people rate universal accessibility as most important, while providing local and regional programming, programmes that bring the nation together, and programmes that are important to our culture, are also important. There are also some similarities with factor 1, in the importance associated with citizen participation, independent regulation, trustworthy news and independence and accountability. The need for programming that might be undersupplied by the market (local and regional programming and high-quality children's programmes) is also rated highly in this perspective. In contrast, diversity-related issues are generally rated as neutral or having low importance, as compared to other factors. Several regulation-related items are given low importance, and items relating to consumer preferences and demand are also less important (e.g. making programmes easy to find and watch, delivering popular programmes, a wide range of sports and leisure (least important) and catering to a wide range of interests).

This perspective thus overlaps to some extent with the factors 1 and 3, but is distinguished in particular by its lack of concern for diversity. This is reflected in the distinguishing statements for the factor, which are:

- It should deliver local and regional programming (*rated higher than all other factors*)
- It should provide high-quality children's programmes (*rated higher than all other factors*)
- It should be regulated and regularly reviewed by an independent body (*rated lower than factor 1 but higher than factors 2 and 3*)
- Regulation should apply to any organisation that produces public service broadcasting-style content (*rated lower than factor 1 but higher than factors 2 and 3*)
- It should fairly represent a whole range of diversity, including gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and different UK communities (*rated lower than all other factors*)
- It should provide a platform for new voices (e.g. youth, minority communities) (*rated lower than all other factors*)

Like factor 3, this perspective was clearly identified, but does account for only 3 participants' views, and so may be a minority view among the wider public.

Factor 4: An accessible public service

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
It should broadcast a wide range of sports and leisure activities	Regulation should only apply to a few organisations that are mainly responsible for public service broadcasting	Regulation should include targets for diversity, for which broadcasters are held to account	Its programmes should cater to a wide range of interests, including specialist interests	Processes and practices of public service broadcasters should be transparent, to facilitate public accountability	It should broadcast programmes about topics that are not always popular, but are still important to our culture	It should provide reliable and trustworthy news and investigative journalism	It should deliver local and regional programming **	Its programmes should be available to everyone in the UK
	It should be self-funding through advertising or a monthly subscription	It should facilitate a sense of community among its audiences	Regulation should apply to any organisation that produces public service broadcasting-style content*	It should foster diversity in the production industries, including in key decision-making roles	It should be editorially independent and impartial, free of government or commercial influence	It should broadcast events that bring the nation together (e.g. the Olympics, royal weddings, elections)	It should provide citizens with enough information to understand and participate in political processes and debates	
		Its programmes should be easy to find and watch on a range of platforms and devices	It should be innovative	It should provide an alternative to purely commercial media	Regulation should protect audiences by controlling the use of audience data by PSB companies and third parties	It should provide high-quality children's programmes**		
		It should deliver popular programmes (e.g. reality TV, soaps)	It should provide a platform for new voices (e.g. youth, minority communities)**	Its programmes should represent the UK to the world	It should commission its programmes mainly from UK media production companies	It should be regulated and regularly reviewed by an independent body**		
			It should fairly represent a whole range of diversity, including gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and different UK communities**	It should deliver high-quality, original programmes, in terms of content and production standards	The public should be able to influence decisions about how public service media operate			
				It should be funded by a compulsory licence fee				
				Its programmes should educate audiences				

Conclusions and recommendations

Our conclusions and recommendations focus on three things: priority principles to consider for the future of public service broadcasting consultation; tensions that have to be confronted when making decisions about the future of public service broadcasting; and the value of deliberative public engagement for consultation about the future of public service broadcasting.

Priority principles

Based on the research findings, we suggest that Ofcom prioritise the following principles when integrating a public perspective into their recommendations for the future of public service broadcasting. Some of these align with and confirm the findings of Ofcom's existing internal research. However, the data in this report delivers some insight into why the public take the views that lead to these recommendations.

- a. The need to ensure an **independent** public service media provision
An independent public service media was a top priority, in terms of being free from both government interference and from corporate influence. In the discussions, independence was a key distinguishing feature of public service media, linked to the licence fee, to high quality news and information, and to being able to take risks with content and format. In the Q sort results, independence was linked to effective regulation and accountability in the first, most dominant factor. This suggests that independence is something that participants believe should be safeguarded through both standard-setting and adequate scrutiny; it does not happen as a matter of course.
- b. The need to ensure public service media are **effectively regulated and overseen** so that the public interest in the service is protected
Regulation is linked to preserving the independence of public service media by our participants, but also reaches into other areas of public service provision. In the discussions, participants linked it to diversity and funding, while in the Q sort, regulation was a significant focus in the first, dominant factor, linked to three of the distinguishing statements. This indicates a belief not only in the importance of regulation, but also in its ability to preserve the principles that underpin public service broadcasting and distinguish it from commercial or government-dominated services.
- c. The need to **prioritise diversity** (conceived broadly) as a key aspect of public service provision, both on and off screen, and potentially as a characteristic that is formally regulated.
Diversity was a significant topic of conversation throughout the discussions, was widely supported in the voting and also featured strongly in the Q sort. The idea of 'diversity' was subject to a range of interpretations, but was linked to broadcasters' ability to deliver on their public service remit of representing audiences fairly, educating and informing, and communicating contemporary forms of British identity. In the Q sorts, diversity was a significant feature of the two most dominant factors, understood both as a politically important issue when it was related to adequate representation and inclusion (factor 1) and a culturally and socially important issue, when it was related to diversity of content that reflected the variety of UK identities and communities (factor 2). Both interpretations reflect a commitment to pluralism among participants, and a desire for public service media to reject singular notions of UK identity in future.
- d. The need to **protect programming that may not be commercially viable** but serves the public interest and the interests of UK communities.

This priority is linked to the cultural and social importance of diversity in content, but also ties back to the principle that public service media should provide a service for all citizens and all interests. The priority is also connected to the independence of public service media from commercial interests. In the discussions, participants associated this kind of programming with the value that public service media offered as a way of educating its audiences and extending their knowledge of and interests in the world, in a way that more narrowly targeted commercial content (or mass-appeal formats) would not. Thus, it speaks directly to the unique aspects of public service provision that make it distinctive from its commercial competitors. In the Q sorts, the emphasis on breadth of programming was seen most clearly in the third factor, supported by participants who advocated for a comprehensive public service and also rated highly other aspects of public service provision, such as accessibility, programming that brings the nation together, and independent news.

- e. The need to **protect accurate and trustworthy journalism** and information provision, with a view to enabling citizenship

This priority reflects a consensus across all participants, and is commonly recognised in other research on public service media. In the discussions, participants' comments on this topic revolved around the need to have a trusted source of news and information that provided a balanced perspective of events, even if one's news sources were more diverse than they used to be. In the Q sort, the statement 'It should provide reliable and trustworthy news and investigative journalism' was rated highly in all the factors, regardless of their other emphases. Thus, this priority could be seen as equating to a non-negotiable aspect of public service media, highly important to preserve for the future.

Tensions

The discussions in the Citizens' Assembly also highlighted some of the central tensions in the delivery of public service media that are essential to take into account in discussions about the future of public service broadcasting. These tensions are not easily resolved, but they are the basis of some of the deep divisions in views about how and why public service broadcasting is worth preserving, and in what form. As such, they are an unavoidable part of the debate that Ofcom is asking the public and stakeholders to engage in.

Importantly, while we separate out the tensions here for heuristic purposes, they all stem from the same overarching 'macro-tensions' related to the audience's role as both citizen and consumer, and to the operation of public service broadcasting in a marketised environment. These overarching macro-tensions constantly raise questions of trade-offs between citizen 'needs' and consumer 'wants, as well as public and individual interests, and were evident throughout the discussions, reflecting arguments that have long been present in media policy discussions (see, e.g. Livingstone and Lunt, 2007).

- **The tension between programming for market-driven interests and for collective, societal benefits**

This tension is reflected in debates about whether content should be programmed for audiences as consumers (based on demand) or citizens (based on an understanding of a societal good); and about the basis for the public's right to influence public service broadcasters and the broadcasters' obligations to inform the public about their decisions and activities.

- **The tension in audiences' self-perceptions as consumers and citizens**

This tension was revealed in discussions where participants simultaneously articulated their roles as consumers in a highly competitive market for broadcast content and as citizens who recognise the value of a broadcasting service that caters to collective, rather than individual interests; and in the associated expectations that broadcasters would cater to these two identities, and their associated rights and obligations.

- **The tension between representing diversity authentically, and representing diversity that ‘sells’**

This tension emerged in debates about the need for more integration of diversity across all programming and the ability to make more ‘space’ for diverse perspectives in niche programming; about the need to reduce stigma and the tendency for diversity to consist of stereotypical representations; and about the value of content that ‘sells’ in a global market, a particular, old-fashioned but inauthentic British identity, vis-à-vis content that might travel less well, but is more reflective of diverse contemporary British realities.

- **The tensions between relying on public funding, charging based on demand, and the need to increase funding to remain competitive**

This set of tensions emerged in discussions about whether the licence fee should be charged in the same way to everyone, or tailored based on what media is consumed; and the fact that public service broadcasters operate in a highly competitive landscape, where their shows, talent and audiences can easily be poached by commercial broadcasters (such as Netflix or Amazon Prime), but have fewer resources to spend on quality programming and popular formats.

In the context of these tensions, participants proposed a range of trade-offs, including a licence fee that had a compulsory public service component and an optional, subscription-style component; advertising permitted but tightly regulated (e.g. only permitted advertising by ethical companies); advertising permitted in a limited range of channels only; increasing forms of public engagement (from survey-style initiatives to gather public input at scale to citizens’ assemblies); and different content types (e.g. arts, sports) programmed proportional to public demand. These trade-offs represent a starting point for further creative thinking and discussion about how the future of public service broadcasting might be secured.

Deliberative public engagement

Finally, we note the value of a deliberative approach to public consultation for issues such as public service broadcasting, which Ofcom and others may wish to consider in future consultation exercises. Engaging the public in deliberation can nurture the citizen perspective of public service broadcasting, which we suggest is in danger of being marginalised by a consumer orientation. This is, in part, because there are so few spaces in which it is articulated or discussed; audiences are approached as consumers far more often than as citizens, and setting up opportunities for deliberation can contribute to redressing this balance.

A deliberative approach is especially well suited to considering the future of public service broadcasting as a policy issue, because it enables the public to reflect on difficult questions about changes in media industries and technologies alongside consideration of more deep-seated values. Members of the public may not have reflected on these questions before, even though they have a significant impact on all our lives. This project shows that, given the opportunity, the public can, and will, engage with detailed arguments, consider tensions and identify priorities based on careful reflection.

Deliberation is particularly important for public service broadcasting policy because it is designed to serve the public, and (in the case of the BBC) is paid for collectively through the licence fee. As with other public services, it is important that people know the value of the service not only for them as individual consumers, but also for other citizens and society at large. From a democratic perspective, it is therefore appropriate that the public should have an opportunity to discuss its future with one another, as citizens. Through the discussions and in the subsequent interviews, participants said that they had not only enjoyed the opportunity to take part in the discussions, but had also changed their opinions as a result of their participation. Moreover, the online version of the Citizens' Assembly run for this exercise showed that, even when participants are not face to face, their discussions are still productive and generate valuable insights on which they can base their decisions. Online versions of the Citizens' Assembly model may be an important future consideration for Ofcom, given the ongoing pandemic and the potential for a new era of austerity as the cost of dealing with its consequences becomes clearer.

This project allowed citizen perspectives to be effectively brought to bear on questions about the principles public service media should be based on, and about the content the public should receive in return for their support. Public deliberation of this kind, conducted across groups from different demographic backgrounds, can encourage this kind of 'enlarged' perspective and judgement (Moynagh, 1997) and is a valuable element in the available toolkit for effective public consultation. The findings in this report show that a deliberative approach can enable Ofcom to obtain public input not only on what public service media should provide, but also on how that provision should be delivered and regulated. In this way, it facilitates public input into a broad range of policy questions. Further, the detailed data that accompanies deliberation (and, in this case, Q sort analyses) illuminates the complex and nuanced underpinnings of the logic behind public positions, which may otherwise remain masked. This means that policy compromises, which will inevitably be required, can be conducted from a more informed understanding of the public view.

Appendix 1: Question guides for moderators

SESSION 1. LEARNING

Small-group discussions

Session Outcomes	Discussion questions
<p>By the end of the session, participants should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developed an understanding of public service broadcasting / media in the UK (purposes, characteristics, organizations, regulation) • begun to reflect on each other's understanding and interpretation of these ideas • developed an understanding of current trends in media industries and media use and how these trends may affect public service 	<p>Understanding public service broadcasting / media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which media organisations and channels are public service and why? • How do these organizations and channels differ from one another? • What are the main characteristics and purposes of public service? • How are public service media regulated? <p>Reflecting on personal interpretations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do they interpret or define terms such as 'high-quality', education, 'diverse'? • Does that align with what they see in broadcasting? <p>Understanding current trends in media industries and media use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the most important current trends in media industries and media use? • How might these trends have an impact on public service media? (purposes, characteristics, organizations, regulation)

Whole group discussion

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give a flavour of group discussions • Answer questions • Look ahead to next session ('deliberation')
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SESSION 2. DELIBERATION

Small-group discussions

Session outcomes	Discussion questions
<p>By the end of the session, participants should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reflected on and evaluated the value of the public service purposes and characteristics in today's media environment• reflect on and consider their priorities for the future direction of public service media	<p>Evaluating the purposes and characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are the public service purposes and characteristics still important in the current media environment? Are some more important than others? If so, why?• Should any purposes and characteristics be added or removed?• Should the way they are applied be changed (e.g. apply to more or fewer media organisations; to different kinds of media; prioritising some purposes and characteristics more than others?) <p>Future direction of public service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Given your views about the purposes and characteristics, and changes in the media landscape, what should the future direction of public service media be?• What are your priorities?

Whole group discussion

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share and review key ideas from across groups• Answer any questions• Look ahead to next session ('recommendations')

SESSION 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Small-group discussions

Session outcomes	Discussion questions
<p>By the end of the session, participants should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developed recommendations on the future of public service media • reflected on and evaluated these recommendations • decided which recommendations are most important 	<p>Developing recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given your priorities for public service media, what recommendations would you make for the future? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In developing your recommendations, consider <i>what</i> public service content is produced, <i>how</i> it is produced, and/or the way public service is <i>regulated</i>. Recommendations could be for government, Ofcom, and/or the media organizations themselves. • What are the three most important recommendations you would make? Why are they the most important?

Whole group discussion

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share key recommendations from across groups • Answer any questions • Look ahead to final session ('Decision-making') and introduce Slido, if there is time

SESSION 4. DECISION-MAKING

Whole group discussion

Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share an overview of key recommendations from groups provided by the research team (any overlaps and tensions in recommendations will be highlighted) • Introduce/refresh memories about Slido • Vote on final set of recommendations

Appendix 2: Q Sort Statements

What?

- It should provide reliable and trustworthy news and investigative journalism
- It should provide citizens with enough information to understand and participate in political processes and debates about current events and issues happening at a national and international level
- It should be editorially independent and impartial, free of government or commercial influence
- It should broadcast programmes about topics that are not always popular, but are still important to our culture (e.g. topics in history, politics, religion, the arts)
- It should deliver high-quality, original programmes, in terms of content and production standards
- Its programmes should cater to a wide range of interests, including specialist interests
- It should deliver local and regional programming
- Its programmes should educate audiences by introducing them to new experiences and information, and challenging content
- It should broadcast a wide range of sports and leisure activities
- It should broadcast events that bring the nation together (e.g. the Olympics, royal weddings, elections)
- It should provide high-quality children's programmes
- It should fairly represent a whole range of diversity, including gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and different UK communities
- It should deliver popular programmes (e.g. reality TV, soaps)
- Its programmes should represent the UK to the world
- It should provide an alternative to purely commercial media
- It should be innovative
- It should facilitate a sense of community among its audiences

How?

- It should be funded by a compulsory licence fee
- It should be self-funding through advertising or a monthly subscription
- Its programmes should be easy to find and watch on a range of platforms and devices (e.g. websites, apps)
- It should provide a platform for new voices (e.g. youth, minority communities)
- Its programmes should be available to everyone in the UK
- It should foster diversity in the production industries, including in key decision-making roles
- It should commission its programmes mainly from UK media production companies

Regulation?

- It should be regulated and regularly reviewed by an independent body
- Regulation should only apply to a few organisations that are mainly responsible for public service broadcasting
- Regulation should apply to any organisation that produces public service broadcasting-style content
- The public should be able to influence decisions about how public service media operate
- Regulation should include targets for diversity (e.g. of gender, ethnicity, age) in key areas (e.g. onscreen representation, senior production staff), for which broadcasters are held to account
- Processes and practices of public service broadcasters should be transparent, to facilitate public accountability
- Regulation should protect audiences by controlling the use of audience data by PSB companies and third parties.

Appendix 3: Participant Demographics

Gender	Male	23
	Female	22
Age	18-24	10
	25-34	15
	35-44	6
	45-54	4
	55-64	9
	65 or over	1
Ethnicity	White (includes Gypsy/Irish Traveller)	22
	Black/Black British (Black/African/Caribbean)	6
	Asian/Asian British (includes Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Other Asian)	14
	Mixed	0
	Other	3
Occupation	Managerial and professional worker	20
	Intermediate occupations	4
	Routine and manual	0
	Not working / long-term unemployed	1
	Not Classified (student / retired)	16
	Unspecified	2
Region	Scotland	2
	Northern Ireland	1
	Wales	0
	North East England	0
	North West England	2
	Yorkshire and the Humber	1
	East Midlands	2
	West Midlands	2
	South East England	3
	South West England	3
	East of England	1
	Greater London	26
	Unspecified	2
Education	A-level	10
	UG Degree	23
	Masters Degree	11
	Doctorate	2

Appendix 4: Recommendations in order of ranking

Ranking	Recommendation
6.5	Maintain the BBC's independence from government
6.5+	
6.4	Protect scientific and educational programming
6.2	Ensure enough diversity of perspectives to ensure the public can make informed decisions / take an informed perspective about an issue
6.1	Prioritise accuracy and detail over speed of news
6.1	Ensure public service content can be accessed across different platforms and is easy to find (e.g., better cataloguing, using up-to-date technologies)
6.1	Diversify people who work in commissioning to promote new ideas and more creative decision making
6.1	Place greater emphasis on accuracy, trustworthiness and truth, rather than simply seeking to balance opposing views
6	Protect cultural / arts programming
6	Review the relative importance of purposes and characteristics based on changing contexts (e.g. emphasise more the value of reliable news in an era of disinformation)
6+	
5.9	Recommend and expose audiences to diverse content that goes beyond their existing habits and preferences
5.9	Ensure diversity in production staff and production companies / locations to ensure output is diverse and avoid London-centric perspectives
5.9	Ensure events with national significance are programmed on non-subscription, free-to-air media
5.8	Protect children's programming
5.8	Democratise public service by increasing transparency, accountability, giving the public a stronger voice in decision making (e.g., survey of licence-fee payers, allowing licence-fee payers to vote for boards, feedback mechanisms for content/programming)
5.7	Seek out new voices, including youth and people from minority communities, and give them a platform within the PS system
5.7	Establish a distinctiveness / distinct identity for the BBC
5.7	Focus on gaining public trust rather than on competing with other media outlets
5.7	Protect local content, including news coverage

5.6	Introduce ethical standards for advertisers on public service media (rank your agreement where 1* = strongly disagree and 7* = strongly agree, 4* = neutral)
5.6	Avoid 'easy', lower quality or repetitive formats that have no ability to make the viewer 'think' and replace with better quality shows (e.g. hard-hitting, in-depth programmes about complex issues or other parts of the world)
5.6	Produce media that is widely consumed and shared and so can facilitate conversation among audiences and build communities
5.6	Expect higher standards of data protection from public service media as compared to other media organisations
5.6	Place greater emphasis on investigative journalism
5.6	Emphasise on-screen diversity more
5.6	Maintain public service media that are owned publicly and not influenced by private media owners
5.5	Rather than try to achieve balance in particular programmes (e.g., documentaries), allow stronger views that reflect current debates, but seek diversity across the whole PSB output
5.5	Remove the idea of a single UK cultural identity from the purposes and characteristics – UK cultural identity is represented through diversity
5.5+	
5.4	Incorporate diversity into all programme offerings instead of singling out (i.e. a specific ethnic group in one programme)
5.4	Place greater emphasis on taking risks, being innovative, and generating new and ground-breaking content
5.4	Clarify the meaning of key concepts associated with public service media and how they differ from one another
5.4	Enhance community content and participation (e.g. utilizing digital technologies to enable contributions from local communities across the UK)
5.3	Make the licence fee scaled (progressive) by not charging those less able to pay (means-testing) and charging more to those who can afford it
5.3	Expand the idea of diversity as a key characteristic of public service media
5.2	Measures to enforce licence fee (e.g., threatening letters) should be relaxed
5.1	Focus on what commercial media cannot do (e.g. deliver local programming, educational content, reliable news and current affairs) and leave other areas to the market (e.g. entertainment programmes)
5+	

4.9	Use digital media to promote community and connection (e.g. hashtags to encourage discussion, as in #whoshotlucy)
4.8	Foster collaboration between public service broadcasters to produce better outcomes (as measured by the purposes and characteristics of public service media), and to compete against other media
4.8	Move to a combined model of funding through a licence fee and national lottery funding
4.6	Enable more customization and personalization to recommend content based on people's habits and preferences
4.6	Adapt formats to new styles of viewing / engaging (e.g. shorter episodes, but longer series; podcasts; shorter chunks of news)
4.5	Extend more public service-style regulation to online platforms and services
4.5	Move to a combined model where the public pays for a basic public service focused on what is socially beneficial (informative and educative content), but other content is funded by consumers on a commercial basis (e.g., advertising and/or subscription)
4.5+	
4.4	Do not extend public service requirements to other media organizations
4.2	Treat all the purposes and characteristics as equally important – don't prioritise any particular ones
4.1	Allocate budget and airtime based on the % of the public interested in different topic areas
4	Move to a variable licence where everyone pays a minimum fee, but pay additional amounts for different types of content.
4	Fund the BBC directly through taxation like other public institutions
4+	
2.8	Abolish the licence fee and run media on a purely commercial basis (e.g., advertising and/or subscription)

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