**£57M YOUNG AUDIENCES CONTENT FUND OPENS FOR APPLICATIONS**

BFI appoints team led by Jackie Edwards, including John Knowles as Production Executive, Harriet Williams as Development Executive and Hesham Sabry as Business Affairs Executive.

**Monday 1 April 2019:** The BFI today launches the UK Government’s Young Audiences Content Fund (YACF), revealing the team, led by Head of Fund Jackie Edwards, which will deliver the three-year pilot fund of up to £57 million. Devised to support the creation of high quality new programming for children and young audiences (up to the age of 18), to free-to-access Ofcom regulated television and online platforms, the Fund aims to directly address a historic lack of investment in content creation for this age group.

Financed by the UK Government, as part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport’s Contestable Fund, the YACF is now open for applications, seeking projects which will entertain, inform and reflect young audiences’ experiences of growing up across the UK today.

Completing the team, who will work with Edwards, John Knowles joins as YACF Executive – Production, Harriet Williams as YACF Executive – Development, Hesham Sabry as the Fund’s Business Affairs Executive, Gill Biddle as YACF Project Manager, Chandan Shergill as the Fund Coordinator, and Aisha Jan as Administrator. In view of where the recruited team are currently located, the YACF will have bases in Leeds and Manchester, whilst also utilising the BFI’s existing UK-wide infrastructure and network of partners to ensure that the YACF team are accessible to talent and commissioners all over the UK.

**Ben Roberts,** BFI’s Deputy CEO, said: “This Fund has the potential to foster a step change in the creation of original content for young people in the UK, particularly under the guidance of Jackie and her new team. The content we consume in our youth can have an enduring impact and contribute to shaping who we become. Technology and audience appetites are changing the way content is financed and consumed, and young people will continue to propel the industry forward in unexpected ways. That is why it is vital this Fund creates quality content for them, accessible on a range of platforms.”

**Minister for Digital and Creative Industries Margot James** said: “Young people in the UK deserve high quality content that entertains, informs and reflects their experiences growing up across the country today.

“The UK’s broadcast sectors reach hundreds of millions of people of all ages around the globe and are a tremendous success story that we are justifiably proud of. This innovative project is an integral part of our ongoing support for the UK’s vibrant media sector which we want to see go from strength to strength, and the BFI have put a great team in place to deliver this.”
Jackie Edwards, BFI’s Head of the YACF, said: “I am thrilled to have recruited such a strong team – their experience and expertise will enable us to reach and support talent right across the UK. This Fund provides a fantastic opportunity for independent producers working in young people’s programming. I’ve had really positive conversations with the broadcasters, who are engaged and keen to commission new content, so I’m hugely excited about the potential of creating brilliant shows that will connect with their intended audience, who have for so long been underserved.”

John Knowles has been appointed YACF Executive - Production; a BAFTA nominated children’s TV producer with incredibly strong credentials, John joins the YACF team from his previous role as In-House Development Producer for Animation and Puppetry at BBC Children’s. His previous experience includes roles at Brown Bag Films working on Nickelodeon series Nella the Princess Knight, Factory Studio on Disney’s Club Penguin TV Specials, Laughing Gravy Media on the international co-production series Dinopaws for CBeebies in the UK & Treehouse TV in Canada and Impossible Pictures on CITV’s series Fleabag Monkeyface.

John Knowles comments: “I’m very excited and proud to be involved in this immensely important project, which will forge a new direction for representative and informative content, reflecting the UK’s culture for our young audience now and in the future.”

Harriet Williams takes up the position of YACF Executive - Development, joining the team from the Original Programming team at Disney Channel EMEA, where she worked on the development and production of scripted live action series, including The Evermoor Chronicles & Disney’s The Lodge.

Harriet Williams comments: “I’m super thrilled to be part of the effort to rejuvenate content for young people in the UK and cannot wait to get started. I’m particularly excited to support new talent in providing fresh ideas to really represent and connect with today’s audiences.”

Hesham Sabry, will be the YACF Business Affairs Executive, coming from the BBC where he was he worked in the commercial, rights and business affairs team as a manager across the full range of output for six years. He headed the acquisition and independent commissioning legal work and also provided legal and business affairs support to high profile in house titles like Blue Peter.

Hesham Sabry said: “I’m hugely excited by the opportunity to support British producers in delivering high quality distinctive content to public service platforms.”

Gill Biddle has been appointed YACF Project Manager, having previously worked in Project and Production Management on titles for the BBC, ITV, the Smithsonian Channel and National Geographic.
Gill Biddle said: “The YACF is a valuable and much needed pilot, and I am delighted in anticipation of its launch. I feel very privileged that I'm able to be involved.”

Chandan Shergill, is the newly appointed YACF Coordinator. She comes from the public and charity sector and previously worked in a factual talent agency, working across numerous children's shows and live events.

Aisha Jan takes the role of YACF Administrator, having previously worked as Marketing Assistant for Sheffield Doc/Fest.

With a rolling deadline for Production and Development Funding the BFI is seeking applications for original programming with public service broadcasting values, in both live-action and animation, and across all genres including entertainment, education, comedy, drama, arts and culture, factual and religion.

Production Funding requires a formal broadcast commitment from an Ofcom regulated free-to-access channel or platform. Development Funding will prioritise supporting exciting new voices and emerging producers with projects that are intended for broadcast but are not in a position to secure a commission.

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For further information contact:

Judy Wells, Press and PR Director, BFI
020 957 8919 / 07984 180 501 / judy.wells@bfi.org.uk

Colette Geraghty, Senior PR Manager, Corporate, Industry and Partnerships, BFI
020 7173 3256 / 07771 980 231 / colette.geraghty@bfi.org.uk

Fiona McGarva, Managing Director, Sundae Communications
0161 278 1452 / 07786 434 313 / fiona@todayissundae.co.uk

Marie-Clare Scott, Account Manager, Sundae Communications
0161 278 1452 / 07851 074 774 / marieclare@todayissundae.co.uk

About the Young Audiences Content Fund
Managed by the BFI, the Young Audiences Content Fund (YACF) supports the creation of distinctive, high-quality content for audiences up to the age of 18. Up to £57 million over a three year pilot, will support the creation of distinct, high-quality content for children and young audiences to be broadcast on free-to-access, Ofcom regulated television channels and online platforms.
Financed by UK Government as part of the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport’s Contestable Fund, the YACF aims to provide new avenues for creators of original content and bring new voices to the market, and back content which entertains, informs and reflects the experiences of young people growing up across the UK today.  

[link: www.bfi.org.uk/yacf]

The BFI is the UK’s lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a cultural charity that:

- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of world cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers
- Works with Government and industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.