

Cover sheet for response to an Ofcom consultation
BASIC DETAILS

Consultation title: ACCESS AND INCLUSION

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CONFIDENTIALITY

Please tick below what part of your response you consider is confidential, giving your reasons why

Nothing : X

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Access and Inclusion

Digital communications for all

Submission from the

UK Film Council
10 Little Portland Street
London
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Consultation

Publication date: 18 March 2009

Closing Date for Responses: 3 June 2009

June 2009

Access and Inclusion

Digital communications for all

A response from the UK Film Council

Executive Summary

- The UK Film Council supports the Media Literacy Task Force position and contribution to the national Media Literacy Working Group. It fully agrees with the Task Force emphasis on the central importance of 'media literacy' in giving all users their best opportunity to reach their fullest potential through digital technologies.
- By media literacy it means that users and audiences are able to be creative, critical and culturally aware of the many contexts of media whether historical, generic and aesthetic as set out in the Charter for Media Literacy (www.medialiteracy.org.uk)
- In addition, the UK Film Council wishes to underline the importance of the internet for the development of creativity and talent both in relation to people individually and for communities' own communications and expression, and for the development of an informed and tolerant democracy.
- The internet and online services are also vital to the sustainability of the film and moving image content industries and value chain in the digital age
- The UK Film Council would further like to draw the attention of the Select Committee to the impressive media literacy and film education work carried out in the Nations and Regions of the UK
- The UK Film Council submits that all citizens should, as an entitlement, be educated, encouraged and positively supported in their online communications, their creative and critical use of the internet and digital technologies.
- We welcome Ofcom's recognition that take-up of broadband internet services, particularly among disadvantage groups, requires an immediate policy focus and welcome Ofcom's recognition that tackling the barriers that disabled people face when using communications services should be a priority,
- That formal education should address this entitlement through the support of adequately trained teachers and classroom resources
- That informal opportunities for learning in a media rich society should be encouraged and supported by government and therefore by Ofcom in its policies and partnerships.

1. Background

The UK Film Council is the Government backed lead agency for film in the UK ensuring that the economic, cultural and educational aspects of film are effectively represented at home and abroad. Our goal is to help make the UK a global hub for film in the digital age, with the world's most imaginative, diverse and vibrant film culture, underpinned by a flourishing, competitive film industry.

The UK Film Council does not just work to ensure British films get made and that British studios and skills stay competitive. The cultural and educational aspects of film are equally important drivers both of its policy and funding priorities. The UK Film Council believes that having access to a diverse choice of films and moving image, enjoying them, understanding them, perhaps even making them should be open to everyone in the UK.

2. Key Issues

The UK Film Council is a founder member of the Media Literacy Task Force and supports its work with and contribution to the National Media Literacy Working Group and any further work it may contribute following the recommendations of the final Digital Britain Report. Our submission to the consultation on the Digital Britain interim report is at <http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/media/pdf/6/9/UKFilmCouncilDBResponseFinal.pdf>

We believe that in a digital age the development of next generation broadband services is one of the keys to helping to advance a number of our policy priorities including:

- Helping to develop a media literate UK
- Promoting social inclusion and diversity especially via services to rural and remote communities and the disabled
- Improving public access to British and specialised films via legal services

We wish to underline the importance of the internet for the development of online communication, creativity and expression in all citizens, in their fullest diversity and variety, and of talent in relation to the film and moving image content industries and value chain. The following points are of significance:

- a) The Charter for Media Literacy describes a media literate person as someone who participates fully in our society and culture and thus understands all "3 C s":
 - Being creative
 - Being critical

- Being culturally aware.
- b) This confidence in using the internet and new digital media is vital to the development of new business models for the production, distribution and consumption of film and moving image content. This confidence will increasingly be an essential pre-requisite for use of the internet as a fertile training ground for talent.
 - c) Learning to make choices about content available online, to communicate freely, and to understand the 'message' being communicated – is part of what being media literate means. Being supported and resourced, either in a formal school setting or informally, to become media literate is therefore the joint responsibility of government, the media industries, educators and parents – and citizens themselves.
 - d) Regulation of still relatively uncharted online territories is proving difficult, though the media industries' self and co-regulation should definitely continue be encouraged. Codes of Practice and other means of ensuring responsible content and effective means of classification or warning are potentially useful. Nonetheless developing media literacy skills from an early age will provide a better long term strategy for addressing these challenges.
 - e) The UK Film Council, therefore, maintains that encouraging responsible and creative use of media, and the full range of digital communications is vital. This can be done through wide access to information about the nature of content, as well as by other means that producers and distributors of creative content have developed.
 - f) The UK Film Council would like to draw attention to the impressive media literacy and film education work carried out in the Nations and Regions of the UK, particularly by the British Film Institute and the film agencies of the Nations and Regional Screen Agencies. For more information see: <http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/fundedpartners>
It has also now developed and launched a wide-ranging film education strategy which looks at the means of maximising the benefits and pleasures of literacy education through the means of film throughout the UK: see <http://www.21stcenturyliteracy.org.uk>
 - g) The work of First Light Movies is of particular relevance since it engages young people in a critical understanding of film through the practical process of making movies. Its innovative website for younger audiences is especially of note: www.filmstreet.co.uk as is their Mediabox fund (<http://www.media-box.co.uk/whatis.php?ID=9>)

- h) This wealth of experience, expertise and best practice might well provide models and insights in how to engage people through creative activity and critical understanding that can be of value to the Ofcom's own forward planning. Such educational work fosters competencies in people which empower them to use the 'language' of media and thus to be literate, and thus to participate more fully in UK society today.
- i) It is of vital importance for the creative economy as well as for the social and cultural life of the UK in the twenty-first century that everyone is encouraged to become media literate.

3. Conclusion

The UK Film Council submits in relation to any changes that may be made as a result of this Consultation concerning Ofcom's priorities for people's fuller use of the internet:

- That everyone should have an entitlement to be educated and informed to make the most of their use of the internet and online content throughout their lives
- That formal education should address this entitlement and in particular through the support of adequately trained teachers and classroom resources
- That informal opportunities for learning in a media rich society should be encouraged by Ofcom so that everyone can access and enjoy online communication as well as possible creative and potentially economically productive digital opportunities
- Ofcom has a vital role in these aims and desired outcomes but it also needs to ensure that its partnership working and support of grass-roots and networking initiatives is continued and substantiated in funding and strategic working.
- Content-led and focused initiatives are particularly welcome from the point of view of the UK Film Council as it believes that engagement with exciting and relevant content by the user is the best way to encourage take-up, foster skills and competences and increase diverse voices and users in the online environment.

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