

Negotiations on the future cost of the TV licence kick off

- Culture Secretary kicks off negotiations to agree how much a TV licence will cost from 2022
- Comes as ten-strong panel is appointed to help shape future of public service broadcasting
- Group of experts includes Lord Grade and Nicola Mendelsohn

The negotiations will determine how much a TV licence costs, and as a result how much public funding the BBC and S4C will get, for at least five years from April 2022.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden has asked the BBC to set out its financial needs in line with its public purposes to inform his assessment of the appropriate level for the licence fee and to make sure it offers the best value for money for licence fee payers.

It comes on the day a panel of independent professionals from the worlds of broadcasting, production, journalism and technology are appointed to help shape the future of the UK's public service broadcasting (PSB) system.

The Public Service Broadcasting Advisory Panel includes former Channel 4 chief executive Michael Grade, Facebook's Vice President for Europe Nicola Mendelsohn, and former senior executives of Sky, ITN and Endemol Shine.

The panel will provide independent expertise and advice as part of the government's strategic review of public service broadcasting (PSB), and look at the aims, purpose and overall governance of the UK's current system.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

Public service broadcasting is woven into the cultural fabric of the UK, but to remain relevant and meet people's needs in the digital age it must evolve.

We are today taking a step forward in our roadmap for reform of the BBC and beginning negotiations to agree the cost of a TV licence from 2022 so that it offers fee payers the best value for money.

We are also bringing together experts from the media and tech industries to help shape the future of the public broadcasting system and explore the reforms needed to make sure it is modern, sustainable and successful.

The PSB Advisory Panel will advise ministers on whether public service broadcasting remains relevant and what a modern PSB system should contribute to economic, cultural and democratic life across the UK. It will explore if

current funding and governance models are fit for purpose.

The panel will also support the government in considering the issues raised and recommendations resulting from Ofcom's ongoing PSB Review.

Panellists will be expected to look at the impact of technology on audience habits and expectations as well as the financial sustainability of broadcasters and the overall structure of the TV market. This will include things such as video streaming.

Lord Grade said:

Our public service broadcasting remit has served the nation well for over 80 years but the time has come to review its relevance for the digital age and maybe redefine it.

The UK's public service broadcasters are the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5, alongside STV in Scotland and S4C in Wales.

The panel will not consider or advise on the TV licence fee settlement process, which the government expects to conclude by the autumn of 2021. The new licence fee settlement will take effect from 01 April 2022.

Reflecting the government's priorities, the Culture Secretary has written to the BBC asking it to set out how it will maximise its commercial revenues and continue to deliver savings. He has also asked the BBC to include details of any further plans to support those in vulnerable groups, including the elderly.

ENDS

Notes to editors

PSB Advisory Panel

The advisory panel will be chaired by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Minister of State for Media and Data. The panel is expected to meet around six times over the course of a year.

Panellists will not be paid for their work but any relevant expenses will be covered by DCMS. [Read the terms of reference](#).

Panellists are appointed on the basis of their personal experience not as representatives of their respective current or former organisations. The full membership of the panel is:

- Baroness Bertin – Senior Advisor at BT and former Press Secretary to David Cameron;
- Miranda Curtis CMG – Non-Executive Director of Liberty Global;
- Sir Robbie Gibb – British broadcast journalist, former Head of BBC Westminster and Director of Communications at No.10;
- Lord Grade of Yarmouth CBE – Former Chief Executive of Channel 4,

Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors, and Executive Chairman of ITV plc;

- Andrew Griffith MP – Member of Parliament for Arundel and South Downs, former Chief Operating Officer & CFO of Sky Group plc and Chairman of the Royal Television Society 2017 Cambridge Convention;
- John Hardie – Former CEO and Editor-in-Chief at ITN;
- Nicola Mendelsohn CBE – Vice President for Europe, Middle East, and Africa at Facebook;
- Dr Samir Shah CBE – Chief Executive of Juniper Productions, Chair of the Museum of the Home and former Deputy Chair, V&A;
- Sophie Turner Laing OBE – Former CEO of Endemol Shine Group;
- Jane Turton – Chief Executive of All3Media.

The UK's system of public service broadcasting (PSB) is the result of a series of regulatory interventions designed to make sure UK audiences can enjoy a wide range of high-quality programmes which meets people's needs and interests. There is no single piece of legislation covering public service broadcasting, but the Communications Act 2003 provides many of the key building blocks. For example, it designates certain broadcasters as 'public service broadcasters'.

Licence Fee Settlement Negotiations

- This is the first settlement negotiation under the new governance and regulatory structure introduced in the last BBC Charter agreed in 2016. It is also the first under which Welsh-language broadcaster S4C is fully funded from the Licence Fee.
- We expect negotiations to have concluded by autumn 2021 to allow time for the necessary changes to be laid before parliament and be incorporated into the BBC's budget for 2022/3.
- [The Secretary of State has written to the BBC and S4C](#) setting out the key factors they should consider when submitting their requests for the next settlement period, as is required by the Charter.
- The government is committed to transparency and consultation over the process and timetable of negotiations with the BBC on the licence fee settlement. Any formal letters on the matter between the government and the BBC or S4C will be published on the government's website.
- In addition, there will be a formal meeting between the Culture Secretary and the BBC following his initial determination, and he will lay his final determination before Parliament to allow time for debate before the settlement takes effect.
- The last funding settlement took place in 2015. During those negotiations the government agreed with the BBC that responsibility for the over 75s concession would become the responsibility of the BBC by June 2020. The government and the BBC agreed this is a fair deal for the BBC – in return, we closed the iPlayer loophole, committed to increase the licence fee in line with inflation until 2022, and reduced a number of other BBC spending commitments.
- The overall licence fee model is guaranteed until the end of the BBC Charter period in 2027, but its reform from this point is something the government has promised to look at.

- The government has recently begun the process to appoint the next Chair of the BBC Board, with applications set to close on November 11th. This will be a hugely significant job in a changing media landscape and the Governance Code, including the public appointments principles, will be followed in making this appointment.
- The government continues to actively consider the responses to the public consultation on whether the criminal sanction remains appropriate for TV licence fee evasion given ongoing concerns about whether it is unfair and disproportionate. We will publish a response in due course.

Government gives £60 million seal-of-approval for North Devon Link Road

- Department for Transport (DfT) announces £60 million funding for the A361, a key road linking Devon with the rest of the UK
- modernisation and upgrade works set to start this month will cut congestion while providing a boost to the local economy
- scheme is part of wider government plans to level-up transport infrastructure across the country as we build back better from COVID-19

Drivers, businesses and residents in North Devon will soon benefit from a multi-million-pound road upgrade set to get underway this month – thanks to £60 million of investment announced today (10 November 2020) by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps.

The funding will kick-start major works on the A361, also known as the North Devon Link Road:

- slashing journey times
- boosting connectivity
- unlocking housing across the region

The major project, being led by Devon County Council, will boost the local economy by supporting plans for 6,700 new homes in the region, making it easier for people to access job opportunities, and for businesses to get around.

Upgrades will not only benefit regional travel, they're also expected to increase cross-country connectivity by improving people's ability to travel into and out of the Southwest.

Works will focus on a 4.8 mile stretch between South Molton and Barnstaple. The route will be modernised with a wider carriageway, which will greatly improve overtaking opportunities, safety and resilience. The road's capacity and 8 key junctions will be upgraded – and, to boost active travel, facilities for pedestrians and cyclists will be introduced along the route.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

I'm delighted to announce this funding to upgrade a vital gateway between Devon and the rest of the country. These works will boost connections, cut congestion for drivers and improve people's quality of life.

It's a clear indication of our commitment to levelling up and investing in transport infrastructure. Through these works, we'll improve people's ability to travel across the Southwest while providing 1000s with greater access to new homes and new jobs.

Councillor Andrea Davis, Devon County Council Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Development and Waste, said:

This announcement is fantastic news for local residents and for Devon's economy. The upgrade of this road is the biggest transport investment in north Devon for a generation. It will help unlock the true potential of the local economy in northern Devon, and with the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic, that's vital at this time.

We've been working tirelessly on this project for a number of years so it's great to see that effort rewarded with this government funding. We'll now be looking to get work started as soon as we can.

The route provides the most direct link between North and South Devon and is a key route linking the Southwest to the rest of the UK. It also acts as a crucial link between the key economic centres of Bideford and Barnstaple. DfT's investment of £60 million makes up the majority of the total costs of the scheme which is £67.6 million.

Improvements to the A361 are the latest boost to transport in Devon, following the opening of the first phase of a new £80 million sea wall at Dawlish by Rail Minister Chris Heaton Harris in September. This investment will provide a resilient railway for generations to come, and forms part of the government's commitment to deliver reliable, punctual journeys across Devon and Cornwall, helping the Southwest build back better and supporting the local economy and tourism.

Ofsted: Children hardest hit by

COVID-19 pandemic are regressing in basic skills and learning

- Ofsted's second report into the impact of the pandemic finds that children who were hardest hit by school closures and restrictions have regressed in some basic skills and learning
- Some young children, who were previously potty-trained, have lapsed back into nappies, particularly those whose parents were unable to work flexibly
- Older children have lost stamina in their reading and writing, some have lost physical fitness, others show signs of mental distress, including an increase in eating disorders and self-harm
- Concerns remain about children who were out of sight during school closures, with falling referrals to social care teams raising fears that domestic neglect, exploitation or abuse is going undetected

Ofsted has today published its second report in a [series looking at the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic across the sectors it inspects and regulates](#), from early years and children's social care, through to post 16 education.

The report finds that some children, of all ages and backgrounds, have lost some basic skills and learning as a result of school closures and restrictions on movement.

Ofsted carried out more than 900 visits to education and social care providers during September and October. These visits are not judgemental and do not result in an inspection grade. Instead, they are a way for inspectors to hear how providers are coping with this challenging start to the new academic year. Overwhelmingly, leaders and managers have said they find the visits helpful and constructive.

Today, 5 reports have been published from the visits, reflecting on the experiences of leaders working in schools, further education and skills, early years, social care and special education needs and/or disability (SEND).

Read reports on our findings for:

A [commentary from HM Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman](#), published alongside the reports, says that children and learners have slipped back in their learning to varying degrees since the first national lockdown in March. Some have coped well in the face of restrictions, while others have been particularly hard hit largely because of the interplay between their circumstances and the impact of the pandemic.

Inspectors found children's experiences weren't necessarily determined by

privilege or deprivation. Rather, those who are coping well have good support structures around them and have benefited from quality time spent with families and carers. This includes children from all backgrounds, including those within the care system, some of whom who saw relationships with carers improve.

However, among children who were greatly impacted by school closures and other restrictions, basic skills and learning have regressed. For example, some young children whose parents were unable to work more flexibly, and who experienced less time with parents and other children, have lapsed back into nappies, while others have forgotten how to eat with a knife and fork, or lost their early progress in numbers and words.

Among older children, inspectors heard that many now lack stamina in reading and writing; some have lost physical fitness; and others are showing signs of mental distress, manifesting in an increase in eating disorders and self-harm.

Across all age groups, children with SEND have been seriously affected in both their care and education, as the services that families relied on – particularly speech and language services – were unavailable.

Inspectors found that senior leaders across the board are working more intensively than ever and showing remarkable resilience. However, leaders across education and social care expressed their concerns over budgets. Covering for staff absences and maintaining enhanced cleaning regimes are pushing up costs in schools and children's homes. These concerns are compounded in early years and further education by worries over income streams.

Ofsted also continues to be worried about the children who were out of sight during the closure of schools. Referrals to social care teams have fallen and have not returned to more typical levels since schools have reopened. This raises concerns that domestic neglect, exploitation or abuse is going undetected.

[Ofsted's first report, published last month](#), found that around a third of the schools visited had seen an increase in children being educated at home. Today's report finds that this remains a concern, with around a half of schools visited seeing an increase in home schooling. School leaders reported that this was being motivated by parents' fears about the virus, rather than their committed desire to home educate.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman said:

We have now entered a second national lockdown. This time, at least, schools, colleges and nurseries are to remain open. That is very good news indeed. The impact of school closures in the summer will be felt for some time to come – and not just in terms of education, but in all the ways they impact on the lives of young people.

As it was in the first lockdown, the work of teachers, social workers and carers, with the support of parents, will again be critical to the future success and happiness of our children.

Ofsted's programme of visits will continue remotely during the current lockdown, and further reports will be published in December.

HMCI commentary: findings from visits in October

Last month, I discussed the [initial findings from our autumn visits](#) to education and social care providers. These visits, unlike inspections, are not aiming to grade schools, colleges, nurseries or children's homes; they are not judgemental at all. Instead, we want to hear from the leaders of these services and use those conversations to better understand the experiences of children and learners during this very challenging start to a new academic year.

In September, we were only able to visit schools and children's homes, but during October we visited all the institutions we would normally inspect. We have published reports that reflect the experiences of leaders working in schools, further education and skills, early years and social care – and we have also looked separately and in more depth at the experiences of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Read reports on our findings for:

Now, after hundreds of visits and discussions, we are developing a clearer picture of how education and social care are responding to the challenges they face at the moment. And we have a better grasp of what those challenges are – both the impact of the pandemic on children, learners and staff, and the systemic issues highlighted or exacerbated over the last 8 months. I'd like to thank all of the leaders and managers who have spoken to us for their candour – and I'm delighted that so many have said they found the discussions helpful and constructive.

It's becoming clear that children's and learners' experiences since the first national lockdown in March fall into 3 broad groups. There are those who have been, and still are, coping well in the face of restrictions; there is a group who have been hardest hit, largely because of the interplay between their circumstances and the impact of the pandemic; and there is the majority – a group who have slipped back in their learning to varying degrees since schools were closed to most children and movement restricted.

The first group – those coping well – can best be summarised as those with good support structures around them, who benefited from quality time spent with families and carers. This shouldn't be confused for a simple message about privilege versus deprivation. It includes children from all backgrounds, including those within the care system, who saw relationships with carers improve, at the same time as the lockdown meant they weren't dealing with wider pressures and challenges that might exist outside of the home.

For some children with SEND, the simpler routines proved beneficial. Without the timetable pressures of a regular school day, remote learning was a positive for those children who enjoyed learning at their own pace. More time for some with family or carers also helped improve language, literacy and communication.

More generally within education, leaders also reported improved communication skills and development among younger children within this group, resulting from more quality time with family – which mitigated the time lost with peers. And older learners also form part of this group. Many further education courses were already partly taught remotely, so the shift away from the classroom was not such a deprivation for those students, who were already used to flexibility and independent learning.

At the other extreme are those children who were hardest hit by school closures and other restrictions: the children in their earliest years of education whose parents were unable to work more flexibly and who experienced the double whammy of less time with parents and less time with other children. Leaders reported regression back into nappies among potty-trained children and others who had forgotten some basic skills they had mastered, such as eating with a knife and fork – not to mention the loss of early progress in words and numbers.

We were told of older children losing stamina when it came to reading and writing; some who had lost physical fitness; and others showing signs of mental distress, including an increase in eating disorders and self-harm. In further education, we know that many apprentices lost their placements or were furloughed. Across all age groups, children with SEND were seriously affected in both their care and education, as the services that families relied on, particularly speech and language services, were unavailable.

And of course, there continue to be concerns about the children who were out of sight while schools were closed to most pupils. Referrals to social care fell and have still not fully returned to more usual levels as schools have returned, raising concerns that neglect, exploitation or abuse is going undetected.

We also know that there has been an increase in the numbers of children who have not returned to school. We reported last month that around a third of the schools we visited reported an increase in children being removed from school to be educated at home. During October, around a half of schools visited reported a rise – with leaders clearer that this was being motivated by concerns around the virus, rather than from parents' committed desire to

home educate. From our conversations, it seems that there is more of a pattern within minority ethnic communities and households including people who are deemed at greater risk from COVID-19.

Listening to leaders across education and social care, it's apparent that the majority of children have neither thrived nor significantly suffered since March – but it's also clear that there has been a negative impact, particularly on their educational development. Lost learning is unarguable, but it is hard to assess. Identifying exactly what children have not learned from the planned curriculum and what is essential for their next steps is key. School leaders believe they will be able to gauge the longer-term impact over time, which will allow them to structure catch-up more effectively. Currently, alongside some interventions such as small-group support, there are more widespread adaptations to the curriculum to focus on core subjects, as we reported last month. It's important that these adaptations are short term and do not slide into a more corrosive, longer-term narrowing of the curriculum.

For now, though, school leaders recognised they were 'firefighting' – which takes a number of forms. Managing COVID-security seems to be evolving. This is particularly the case when it comes to the issues of 'bubbles' and the response to a positive test within the school. While some schools send an entire bubble home to isolate, others have put in place measures such as fixed seating arrangements, to allow for the test and trace process to be more targeted.

Remote learning for those who are self-isolating is the focus of much attention. As we reported last month, schools are putting remote learning in place, often supported by technology and sometimes involving live-streaming lessons.

However, it remains the case that the home learning experience is patchy and, in many cases, not aligned effectively with the classroom curriculum. Children who isolate as part of a bubble seem to be better off than the very many children who are isolating individually, sometimes because of their own health, but more often because of contact with someone who tested positive. And of course, remote learning also requires motivation from pupils who might otherwise be distracted by other technological temptations.

School leaders reported that boys in particular had spent much of the lockdown gaming online with friends. That, and social media use more generally among boys and girls, has impacted on the established social networks in schools. Leaders told us that although the return to clear structures and boundaries at school has often resulted in an unexpected improvement in behaviour, online squabbles while schools were closed are now being played out in classrooms.

The challenges of aligning the classroom curriculum with work done remotely was cited as one of a number of workload pressures on teachers and schools. Others included the need to cover staff absences, with many headteachers reporting that they were taking classes to provide cover, in addition to their leadership duties. There are frustrations too with the shifting

guidelines that schools are required to follow. It is clear that senior leaders across the board are working more intensively than ever, and showing remarkable resilience.

Budgets, as ever, are clearly on the minds of leaders across education and social care. Covering for staff absences and maintaining enhanced cleaning regimes are budgetary pressures most affecting schools and children's homes; these are compounded in early years and further education by concerns over income streams. Local authorities are also feeling the financial squeeze, particularly in relation to supporting vulnerable families and the costs of placements for looked after children. And not all systemic issues are financial. The availability of support and services for children with SEND is a perennial issue, as is sufficiency in the care system. Added to that, the pandemic has led to backlogs in the family courts, which can leave children at risk for longer or conversely, slow them down from moving to a permanent home. These are thorny issues for policymakers to deal with in good times; they have added gravity now.

We have now entered a second national lockdown. This time, at least, schools, colleges and nurseries are to remain open. That is very good news indeed. The impact of school closures in the summer will be felt for some time to come – and not just in terms of education, but in all the ways they impact on the lives of young people. As it was in the first lockdown, the work of teachers, social workers and carers, with the support of parents, will again be critical to the future success and happiness of our children. Our visits will continue remotely – and we will report again in December.

PM call with Prime Minister of Canada: 9 November 2020

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada this evening.



The Prime Minister talked to Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada this evening.

They discussed the coronavirus pandemic and welcomed the promising results from the Pfizer / BioNTech vaccine trials – but agreed that these are early days and there are no guarantees.

The leaders committed to work closely together and with international partners – including President-elect Biden – to champion openness, shared values and the rules-based system during the UK's G7 Presidency in 2021.

Ahead of the Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December and the COP26 Summit in Glasgow next year, they also discussed the importance of global climate action and the need for countries to set ambitious targets to cut emissions and to reach net zero.

The leaders agreed to continue strengthening the bilateral relationship between the UK and Canada – in areas such as trade and security – and to work together to address shared global challenges, including through groupings such as Five Eyes and the Commonwealth.

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