BBC

Not seen, not heard

learning disabled audiences
and the media

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A report on the BBC research into people with learning difficulties/disabilities as members of BBC audiences and users of BBC services

1   Introduction

When BBC New Media commissioned research on the accessibility of BBC websites, the results showed that the people who found them least accessible were people with learning difficulties/disabilities. When the BBC Diversity Centre monitored the BBC's own guidelines on the Disability Discrimination Act Part 3 (looking across 17 high-profile programmes as well as at a range of services), again the results showed that the people who were least catered for were people with learning difficulties/disabilities. It was as a consequence of these findings that the BBC Diversity Centre commissioned research into how people with learning difficulties/disabilities used current BBC services, what they thought of the BBC output and what they would like the BBC to provide.

This report is the result of that research.

1.1   Context

People with learning difficulties/disabilities are covered by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, and therefore the BBC is already required by law to ensure that it makes reasonable adjustments to ensure that people from within this community have equal access to its services.

Similarly, BBC Education is committed to meeting the needs of disabled students as laid down under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001.

The BBC also has its responsibilities as a public broadcaster. Since the research was commissioned in late 2003, there has been a debate around Charter Renewal; commentaries from government, Ofcom and a range of interested people on the nature of public broadcasting; and a raft of reviews within the BBC itself. What has emerged is the need for the BBC to be more accountable to its licence fee payers and more transparent about what people can expect from it as a public broadcaster.

In June 2004 the BBC publicly shared its aims for the next ten years and beyond in a document entitled *Building public value*. This vision of the future lays out what the BBC can and should add to society – and, since society is made up of individuals, what the BBC can and should add to people's lives. The results of the research come at a time when the BBC is committing itself to being closer and more responsive to its audiences and they are therefore even more relevant than when the research was first commissioned.

2   The learning disabled community

2.1   How many people have learning disabilities?

As in many areas, when what is needed is definitive and clear answers, often what exists is both a lack of accurate information and a complexity of data – and so it is within the field of learning disabilities/difficulties. Therefore, rather than entering into complex explanations of who is included within this community and why, how statistics in this field are generated, and the degrees of accuracy within the statistics, this report simply uses the figures adopted by the Government in *Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century* and the definition used by Fryers and Russell in 'Applied Epidemiology' (2003).

According to *Valuing People*, there are about 210,000 people with severe learning disabilities and about 1.2 million people with mild or moderate learning disabilities in England. The BBC research covered not only England but also Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Therefore, given that the incidence of these conditions in the UK does not by and large depend on geography, on a purely proportional basis the overall populations within the UK are 250,000 people with severe learning disabilities and 1.4 million people with mild or moderate learning disabilities. People with learning disabilities, therefore, make up around 3% of the population.

2.2   What is meant by a learning disability?

The question of how to define a learning disability is an emotive and much debated one. Understandably many people from the learning disabled community resist definitions which categorise them in terms of capacity, and indeed it is important to recognise the reinforcements that such definitions lend to negative images and discriminatory practice.

In terms of this research, the only need for any form of definition is so that the people reading the report have some understanding of the breadth and nature of the learning disabled community. Therefore, taking the simplest approach, Fryers and Russell define someone with a severe learning disability as someone who has an IQ of less than 50, while someone who has a moderate or mild learning disability has an IQ between 50 and 69. As a comparison, people with Down's Syndrome have an IQ between 20 and 55.

Whilst having a severe learning disability absolutely follows from having an IQ of less than 50, being defined as having a mild or moderate learning disability is not simply dependent on having a low IQ. A whole range of factors, including purely social factors, affect who is or who is not defined, at any given time and place, as having a learning disability. There is nothing immutable about being part of such a group. As a very obvious example, someone with a low IQ who cannot read or write is much more likely to be regarded as learning disabled in a society where literacy is both necessary and expected than in a society where neither are necessary.

Common and defining to the lives of people with both types of learning disability is the condition of dependency. That is to say, their ability to participate in many aspects of life that the rest of society takes for granted – from deciding where to live to how to spend time – for the most part depends on others

2.3   What conditions are covered by the term 'learning disabilities'?

There are a range of conditions stemming from genetic and metabolic disorders that mean that people are born with learning disabilities. The most common of these is Down's syndrome, but there are others such as Fragile X syndrome, phenylketonuria (PKU), etc. Equally, learning disability at birth can result from maternal illness – rubella being the best known – or drug-taking during pregnancy. It can be associated with other conditions such as cerebral palsy and epilepsy, or can become evident as children develop (autism). And finally it is possible through accident (brain injury) or disease (for example, brain tumour) to acquire a learning disability.

2.4　The demographics of the learning disabled communities

It is comparatively easy to determine the demographics of those with severe learning difficulties. This is a community within which there are usually more men than women at all ages. It is a community where the largest group is within the 35–39 age band, and where distribution across age groups is affected by changes in mortality, prenatal care and post-natal practice. And this is a community where there are more people aged over 45 than there are aged under 15; there has been a substantive increase in longevity for people with learning disabilities over the last 20 to 30 years.

However, this is not like other disabilities, which tend to increase within the population as people age. While accidents and illness will increase the numbers of people with learning disabilities, by and large this is a disability that people acquire at or just after birth. Therefore, despite the increased longevity, this is still a community where there tend to be more people of a younger age than there are in other disabled communities.

Whilst there do not appear to be definitive figures, what research there has been, mainly done in the late 1990s, would appear to show higher frequencies of severe learning disability among people from ethnic minority backgrounds, particularly amongst those from Asian backgrounds, than among the general population.

However, as has already been noted, it is considerably more difficult to make the same kind of statistical analysis around people with moderate or mild learning disabilities: one can only work from current estimates, recognising that people will move in and out of this community as society changes its definitions of mild or moderate learning disability. What is known is that people defined as being within this community too often lead lives which are segregated from mainstream society, even though, as Fryers notes, "What can however be said about this group is that most individuals within it have the basic capacity to be independent and to enjoy an essentially normal life style."

3   The BBC research: the methodology in brief

This is the first time that this kind of market research has been undertaken with people with learning difficulties/disabilities. While the tools used do not differ from the usual research tools – they include a questionnaire, focus groups and structured interviews – because of the nature of community both the design of the tools and the methods of employing the tools are different.

3.1   The questionnaire

The BBC research was informed by the people centred research undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and described in *"We want our voices heard"*. So from the outset it was recognised that the community itself needed to be directly involved. The questionnaire therefore was both created and piloted in consultation with People First Kentish Town. The questionnaire used graphics alongside the text and was produced in large print.

It was decided at an early stage that the questionnaire would primarily be completed in group sessions with both BBC and support workers present, though anyone who wanted to complete a questionnaire and send it in by post was allowed to.

The aim was to collect 500 questionnaires throughout the UK based on the population distribution of the UK. As can be seen from Appendix 1, 559 questionnaires were actually completed, and because of differences in infrastructure and postal votes, some areas did better than others. However, what can be said is that BBC nations and regions were all reasonably well represented and that the research covered both rural and urban areas.

The groups who took part in the research were located through general advertising using BBC national and local radio, through networks such as People First and Mencap, through charities such as the Home Farm Trust, and through both the NHS and Social Services.

The group sessions allowed not only for the filling in of the questionnaires but also for the collection of the names of people who wanted to take part in the focus groups and the collection of anecdotal material through conversations with the participants.

All the tables in this report stem from information gathered through the questionnaire, so the overall sample base is 559 individuals who are basically demographically representative of this community. The results are given in percentages unless otherwise stated.

3.2   The focus groups

There were six focus groups involving 37 participants which took place in BBC buildings in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow. One session was devoted exclusively to the use of the internet.

Participants were sent questions in advance based on the common issues identified in the responses to the questionnaires – news, soaps and accessibility. In addition, participants were invited to raise their own concerns.

3.3   The interviews

The research was completed by structured interviews with people working in the field of media and learning disabilities/difficulties. They included both people with learning disabilities/difficulties and those without. The interviews addressed the same issues as those discussed within the focus groups.

3.4   Language

As in most areas of disability people hold strong views about how they should be defined. 'Learning disability' is a term used by professionals to define people with certain attributes. However, many people with such disabilities, and particularly those involved in the self-advocacy movements, use the term 'learning difficulties'. In this community, as in many areas of disability, there are those who follow the social model of disability and use social terms to describe themselves (learning difficulties) and those who are subsumed into a medical model and use medical terminology.

Since the BBC research took place in local authority residential homes, with people in learning disability teams, with Mencap groups, in homes run by charities and with self-advocacy groups, this report uses both terms.

The above is a brief outline of the methodology. For a detailed explanation and a copy of the questionnaire, see Appendix 1.

4.   The demographics of the BBC research

4.1   Who took part?

The BBC research spanned both categories of learning disability – those with severe learning disabilities and those with moderate or mild learning disabilities. The research did not aim to include all those who might, because of educational needs, be labelled as part of the learning disabled community, such as people with dyslexia; it focused on adults who would meet the basic IQ-based definitions.

To take part, people did not need to be able to read or write but they did need to be able to understand simple questions and make their answers known. Participation in the focus groups required an ability to talk about reactions to TV, radio and the internet on the basis of being asked simple and direct questions.

The research collected demographic information with regard to gender, age, race and geography. Tables 1 and 2 below show the results.

4.2   Differences across gender

Table 1: Gender distribution

	Total	Male	Female
Sample base in numbers	**559**	**316**	**243**
Men %	**56.5**	100	0
Women %	**43.5**	0	100

The gender profile of those taking part in the research (316 men and 243 women) fits with the gender profile of the learning disabled communities. There were, however, gender differences among the regional research groups: those in Northern Ireland and Wales had slightly more women than men.

4.3   Differences across age

Table 2: Age distribution

	Total	Age 16–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55+
Sample base in numbers	**559**	**98**	**138**	**162**	**102**	**59**
Percentage	**100**	17.5	24.7	29.0	18.2	10.6

It was decided to limit the research to people aged 16 and over, so this report relates only to adults with learning difficulties/disabilities and does not deal with children. The largest age group (29%) was those in the 35 to 44 age bracket, and this fits with the age profile across the learning disabled communities. Again, there were some age differences within the research that related to geography: the participants in Northern Ireland were all under 35.

4.4   Differences across ethnic groups

Table 3 shows the ethnic breakdown of those completing the questionnaire. As can be seen, in the area of ethnicity, as in all areas, in order to actually get answers, people were given simple choices.

Table 3: Ethnic Distribution

	Total	White (British, European, Irish)	Black (British, African, African-Caribbean)	Asian (British, Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)	Other	No answer
Sample base in numbers	**559**	**521**	**16**	**20**	**1**	**1**
Percentage	**100**	93.2	2.9	3.6	0.2	0.2

From Table 3, 6.5% or 37 of the participants were of Asian or African origin – this replicates the percentage of people from those ethnic backgrounds in the mainstream population (adjusted census figures 2001). But given the over-representation of people from ethnic minority backgrounds within the community of people with severe learning disabilities/difficulties, the BBC research may have been slightly unrepresentative with regard to race.

4.5   Geographic differences

While geographical and environmental factors can affect the distribution of people with learning difficulties, their impact in the UK in relation to this research is negligible. The main geographic impact that needs to be considered here is the distribution of people from ethnic minorities. There are, of course, geographic differences in terms of ethnicity, but within the research these differences were magnified, in part but not entirely, because of where the participating groups were located. For instance, all the participants in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were white. This is perhaps understandable in Northern Ireland, and can be explained in Wales by the fact that the groups taking part were all based in rural Wales, but it is less comprehensible in Scotland where sessions were held in both Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Table 4 (which uses numbers rather than percentages) shows the presence of people from ethnic minorities in the research within BBC nations and regions.

Table 4: Ethnic distribution of research participants within BBC nations and regions
Base: all who took part

	Total	White (British, European, Irish)	Black (British, African, African-Caribbean)	Asian (British, Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)	Other	No answer
Sample base in numbers	**559**	**521**	**16**	**20**	**1**	**1**
Scotland	**85**	84	0	1	0	0
Wales	**32**	32	0	0	0	0
Northern Ireland	**16**	16	0	0	0	0
East	**37**	36	1	0	0	0
East Midlands	**23**	23	0	0	0	0
London	**88**	62	11	14	0	1
North East and Cumbria	**29**	29	0	0	0	0
North West	**40**	36	1	3	0	0
South	**51**	50	0	1	0	0
South East	**18**	18	0	0	0	0
South West	**23**	22	0	0	1	0
West Midlands	**45**	45	0	0	0	0
West	**18**	17	1	0	0	0
York	**41**	38	2	1	0	0
Yorkshire and Lincolnshire	**13**	13	0	0	0	0

As can be seen, in some areas where there are substantial Asian or Black populations, such as the East and West Midlands, there was a complete lack of representation from these communities within the research. However, in London, which also has a substantial Asian and Black population, over 21% of the participants came from these ethnic groups. Again, some of the lack of representation is probably explained by the locations of the participant groups, for instance in the West Midlands none of the groups were actually based in Birmingham. However, this is not the full explanation.

The issues around ethnicity and all disabilities are complex, and this is equally the case in the field of learning difficulties/disabilities. This report is not the place to discuss such issues, which range from the lack of provision of appropriate services to cultural differences that can lead to people being kept isolated within the family home. This report deals only with the differences, where they exist, that ethnicity produces in the use of the media within this community. Therefore, in looking at the results we simply need to bear in mind that people from ethnic minorities may have been under-represented in general within the research compared to their actual presence within this community, and that they were certainly under-represented within specific geographic areas.

4.6   Summary

The demographics of participants were reflective of the demographics of the learning disabled communities, apart from the area of race where there was probably an under-representation overall – and certainly an under-representation within some areas.

4.7   Demographic analysis within the research report

In the course of the research it became apparent that geographical location and ethnic background made little difference to the participants' use and opinions of broadcast media. There were some exceptions to this. What people listened to was affected by ethnicity. People from Scotland and Wales were aware of and noted on the questionnaire their national identities and occasionally these influenced what they chose to watch or listen to. However, the two factors that did have an effect were age and gender. Therefore, within this report, ethnicity-based and geographic-based analysis is only given where these factors actually made a difference. Their absence does not mean that they were not considered, but simply that they had no impact.

5   Research findings: the factors affecting media use

5.1   How people spend their time

Clearly, the amount of time people spend watching TV, listening to the radio or using the internet is affected by how much time they have available for these activities. Table 5 looks at how people with learning difficulties/disabilities spend their days.

Table 5: Daytime activity – gender and age profile
Base: all who took part

	Total	Male	Female	Age 16–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55+
Sample base in numbers school/college	**559**	**316**	**243**	**98**	**138**	**162**	**102**	**59**
Employment training	**43.3**	38.9	49.0	64.3	45.7	36.4	38.2	30.5
Day/drop-in centre	**61.5**	60.4	63.0	34.7	63	69.1	70.6	66.1
Arts/sports centre	**20.2**	20.6	19.8	16.3	26.8	15.4	19.6	25.4
Work full-time for money	**4.1**	5.1	2.9	6.1	2.9	4.9	2.0	5.1
Work part-time for money	**15.2**	14.6	16.0	11.2	21.0	13.0	18.6	8.5
Work as a volunteer	**21.5**	20.9	22.2	6.1	19.6	32.1	18.6	27.1
Stay at home	**24.5**	21.2	28.8	26.5	26.8	19.1	23.5	32.2
Going out and about	**1.4**	1.6	1.2	3.1	0.7	0.6	1.0	3.4
Other	**1.6**	1.3	2.1	2.0	1.4	1.2	2.0	1.7

While the majority of the adult general population spend their days at work, as can be seen from Table 5 this community is less likely to work. To quote from *Valuing People*: "Very few people with learning disabilities – probably less than 10% – have jobs." This is certainly reflected within the research where only 4% of those taking part worked full time, and a further 15% earned money through part-time work (though this could be as little as one day's work a week).

Although, as would be expected, more people within the 16 to 24 bracket are still in education than in other age groups, this is a community where, unlike people in mainstream society, over a third tend to be involved in some form of ongoing training for much of their lives.

The growth of self-advocacy groups, particularly the People First movement, has provided work, usually on a part-time basis, increased opportunities to do voluntary work, and an alternative to day centres. However, the majority of this community (over two-thirds), once they have left full-time education, still spend much of their time in day centres (which, while undergoing cultural change, are still not necessarily places where much activity takes place). Equally, whatever their age group, around a fifth to a quarter of them spend substantive time at home during the day. As will be seen in the next section, how people spend their time has a major impact on how they use the media (TV, radio and internet).

5.2   Where people live

Changes in attitudes and practice mean that there are far fewer people with learning difficulties/disabilities living in residential care than 15 or 20 years ago. Such institutions have been, or are being, replaced by group homes, supported housing and, more and more, independent living. This is reflected within the BBC research where only 13% of the participants lived in residential care. As

Table 6 shows, it is also the case that members of this community are more likely to live with their parents for longer than people in the general population.

Table 6: Where people live – gender and age profile
Base: all who took part

	Total	Male	Female	Age 16–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55+
Sample base in numbers	**559**	**316**	**243**	**98**	**13.8**	**162**	**102**	**59**
Independently in your own home/with a partner	**17.9**	18	17.7	7.1	13.8	20.4	24.5	27.1
On your own in supported housing/ independent living centre (group home)	**24.0**	22.2	26.3	9.2	17.4	27.8	29.4	44.1
At home with your parents/family	**44.7**	48.7	39.5	76.5	56.5	38.3	28.4	10.2
In a residential care home/in a hospital	**13.1**	10.8	16	6.1	11.6	13.6	17.6	18.6
No answer	**0.4**	0.3	0.4	1	0.7	0	0	0

As Table 7 demonstrates, this is also an area where geography does make a difference, though the research did not really explore why the differences exist. The fact that 62.5% of people in Northern Ireland are living with their parents is probably simply a reflection of the younger age of the Northern Ireland sample (all under 35); whereas the fact that research participants in Wales were far less likely to live in their own homes (only 3%) than people elsewhere in the UK must be a reflection of some aspect of local conditions.

Table 7: Where people live – geographical profile
Base: all who took part

	Sample base	Independently in your own home/with a partner	On your own in supported housing/ independent living centre (group home)	At home with your parents/ family	In a residential care home/in a hospital	No answer
England	**426**	18.8	22.8	41.8	16.4	0.2
Scotland	**85**	16.5	28.2	52.9	1.2	1.2
Wales	**32**	3.1	40.6	53.1	3.1	0
Northern Ireland	**16**	31.3	0	62.5	6.3	0
Total	**559**	**17.9**	**24.0**	**44.7**	**13.1**	**0.4**

5.3   Summary

This is a community who lack work, spend much of their time at home and live in communal situations for much of their adult lives. All these facts are likely to influence both what they watch and what they listen to.

6 Research findings: what media people use

As might be expected, most people have access to a TV. No matter where or how they lived, the research showed that 84.2% of people had a TV in their own room. Although fewer people listened to the radio – 82% compared to the 98% who watched TV – of those who did listen to the radio 88% had a radio in their own room.

6.1 Access to DVDs and video

From Table 8 it can be seen that people were well equipped with video recorders and DVD players, with over half of the younger age groups having access to both.

Table 8: Ownership of video/DVD equipment – gender and age profile
Base: all who took part

	Total	**Male**	**Female**	**Age 16–24**	**Age 25–34**	**Age 35–44**	**Age 45–54**	**Age 55+**
Sample base in numbers	**559**	**316**	**243**	**98**	**138**	**162**	**102**	**59**
Video recorder only	**40.4**	38.6	42.8	25.5	33.3	42	57.8	47.5
DVD only	**8.9**	10.4	7	11.2	9.4	12.3	2.9	5.1
Both	**41.9**	43	40.3	58.2	52.2	37	24.5	33.9
Neither/no answer	**8.8**	7.9	9.9	5.1	5.1	8.6	14.7	13.6

People in the main (78%) used the equipment to watch pre-recorded films and music videos/DVDs, though around a third recorded and then watched TV programmes.

6.2 Access to digital services

Table 9 compares the penetration of digital services within this community in terms of gender and age with the penetration of digital within mainstream society.

Table 9: Digital take-up: comparison between people with learning difficulties/disabilities and the general population – age and gender profile

	Total	**Male**	**Female**	**Age 16–24**	**Age 25–34**	**Age 35–44**	**Age 45–54**	**Age 55+**
Have access to digital – LD research	**53.8**	57.6	49.00	71.4	62.3	54.3	38.2	**30.5**
Have access to digital – general population (Barb, 2004)	**59.7**	70.9	54.4	66.6	62.9	67.1	64.8	43.6

Table 9 shows that in both the general population and within the learning disabled community, men are more likely to have access to digital services than women and younger people are more likely to have access to digital services than older people. However, differences across age groups are much more pronounced within learning disabled communities. Indeed, in the older age groups (age 45 upwards) around two-thirds of those with learning difficulties/disabilities did not have access to digital channels. This is also an area where race made a difference within the learning disabled community, with only 27% of people from ethnic minority backgrounds being without access to digital services compared with approx 47% of the white population.

Table 10 looks at digital take up by nations across the mainstream population compared to those taking part in the BBC research. (NB: the differences between Barb figures for total take-up in Tables 9 and 10 are due to differences in the Barb base populations.)

Table 10 : Digital take-up: comparison between learning disabled and mainstream communities – nations profile

(Barb survey to Sept 2004 updated to latest UK RSMB estimates Dec 2004)

Individuals % take-up	Total	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Access to digital – LD research	**53.8**	52.8	58.8	50.0	62.5
Access to digital – Barb	**63.0**	63.0	63.0	71.0	52.0

The comparatively high access to digital services in Northern Ireland within the BBC research compared with the Barb figures can be explained by the young age of the Northern Ireland sample.

6.3   Access to the internet

41% of respondents used the internet although, as will be seen later on, only 11% were able to use it by themselves. However, within this community, as has happened within the mainstream community, people are starting to use the internet to watch TV and to listen to the radio. Of those who used the net within this community, 22% used it to watch TV and 13% used it to listen to the radio.

6.4   Summary

Whilst people with learning difficulties/disabilities have access to their own TVs and radios, they are less likely by some 6% to 9% to have access to digital than those in the general population. The lack of access to digital is particularly notable within the older age groups where people are less likely to have access to digital by some 13% to 24%.

7 Research findings: TV – rates of consumption

Roughly 98% of those taking part in the research watched TV, making it a popular and, as this report shows, important pastime within this community. This section looks at how much TV people watched, when they watched it, how they chose what to watch and how much control they had over what they watched.

7.1 The amount of TV watched by people with learning disabilities/difficulties

Table 11 shows that people within this community watch on average more television per day than people within the UK population. This difference is particularly notable in terms of heavy viewing (more than eight hours per day), where the percentage of people with learning difficulties/disabilities watching (13.4%) was over twice that of those watching within the general population (6%).

Table 11: Average number of hours watched per day – learning disabled community compared with general population

Number of hours on average watched per day	Average hours per day – PBTS	Average hours per day – BBC LD research
Less than 2 hours a day	32%	16.8%
3 to 4 hours a day	41%	42.5%
5 to 7 hours a day	21%	26.7%
8 hours or more a day	6%	13.4%

The average hours of viewing per day for all respondents to the PBTS (Pan Broadcast Tracking Study) in quarter 4 of 2004 was 3.68 hours per day, whereas for those taking part in the BBC research it was 4.62 hours per day.

7.2 When people watch TV

Table 5 shows that people with learning difficulties/disabilities across all age groups spend more time at home or in 'social' settings than is the norm. As Table 12 shows, this, not surprisingly, is reflected in their consumption of daytime TV.

Table 12: Time of TV consumption – gender and age profile
Base: all who watch TV

	Total	Male	Female	Age 16–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55+
Sample base in numbers	**546**	**307**	**239**	**92**	**135**	**161**	**100**	**58**
Mornings	**46.3**	45.0	48.1	45.7	47.4	41.6	49.0	53.4
Afternoons	**38.5**	35.8	41.8	41.3	39.3	33.5	37.0	48.3
Evenings	**93.0**	90.9	95.8	88.0	90.4	94.4	95.0	100.0
Night time (11pm to 6am)	**26.0**	29.3	21.8	23.9	31.9	22.4	25.0	27.6
No answer	**0.2**	0	0.4	1.1	0	0	0	0

Table 12 shows that whatever the age and gender, between two-fifths and a half of the community watch TV in the mornings and over a third watch it in the afternoons, with almost everyone watching it in the evenings.

There is a great difference in the pattern of TV consumption of people with learning difficulties/disabilities compared to the viewing pattern of the majority of society (Table 13), where less than 10% watch TV in the mornings compared to 46% within the research, where less than 20% watch in the afternoons compared to the 38% within the research, and where less than 5% watch through the night compared to 26% within the research. Even at prime time viewing, a considerably greater percentage within the research (93%) are watching TV compared to those within the mainstream population (42%).

Table 13: Time of TV consumption – learning disabled community compared with general population

	Mornings	**Afternoons**	**Evenings**	**Night time (11pm to 6am)**
Research participants	46.3	38.5	93.0	26.0
General population	9.5	17.3	42.4	4.0

(general population figures taken from BBC Daily Life Survey Oct 2002 to Sept 2003)

7.3 Access to TV – who controls the remote?

We have already seen in Table 6 that many people within this community live either in supported housing or at home with their parents, with, to a lessening degree, some people still living in residential care. From this it might be supposed that people with learning disabilities/difficulties do not have access to their own TV. In fact this is not the case. The research showed that 84% of people had a TV in their own room, although this does still mean that 16% or 88 individuals did not have their own TV.

However, even though people had access to their own TVs to a large degree, Table 14 shows that this is a community where not everyone is able or empowered to make their own choices about what to watch.

Table 14: Who decides what to watch – gender and age profile.
Base: all who watch TV

	Total	**Male**	**Female**	**Age 16–24**	**Age 25–34**	**Age 35–44**	**Age 45–54**	**Age 55+**
Sample base in numbers	**546**	**307**	**239**	**92**	**135**	**161**	**100**	**58**
I decide	**57.7**	60.6	54.0	51.1	59.3	50.9	69.0	63.8
Someone else decides	**9.0**	9.1	8.8	8.7	8.9	11.2	6.0	8.6
A mixture of the two above	**32.8**	30.0	36.4	39.1	31.9	36.6	25.0	27.6
No answer	**0.5**	0.3	0.8	1.1	0	1.2	0	0

As might be expected, the degree to which people were able to choose what they watch depended on where they lived (see Table 15 below).

Table 15: Who decides what to watch – type of residence profile
Base: all who watch TV

	Total	Independently in your own home/with a partner	On your own in supported housing/ independent living centre (group home)	At home with your parents/ family	In a residential care home/in a hospital	No answer
Sample in numbers	**546**	**99**	**130**	**244**	**72**	**1**
I decide	**57.7**	70.7	60	50.4	59.7	100
Someone else decides	**9.0**	5.1	6.9	12.7	5.6	0
A mixture of the two above	**32.8**	24.2	33.1	36.1	33.3	0
No answer	**0.5**	0	0	0.8	1.4	0

Not surprisingly, people who lived in their own homes had the most choice with only 9% having choices made for them. People who lived with their parents/families had the least choice. This could be for a variety of reasons, including the fact that they might be the people least able to make their own choices. As can be seen, just over half made their own decisions about what to watch while a comparatively low percentage (less than 10%) had the decision made for them. The rest were able to make an input into the decision. Given the above and the high percentage of those who had a TV in their own rooms, it can only be supposed that much of the TV watching is done in communal situations, thus allowing for more communal as against individual choices.

Table 16 shows how people choose what to watch; the 12.1% who have someone tell them probably includes the 9% who do not actually make their own choice. The majority, much like the rest of society, either checked the listings (both on screen and in hard copy) or already knew when their programmes were on. Notably no one just went channel hopping.

Table 16: Means of choosing what to watch
Base: all who watch TV

	Total
Sample base in numbers	**546**
I look at the listings magazines, e.g. *Radio Times*/from the newspaper	**38.5**
I know when my favourite programme is on	**19.2**
I just turn it on and watch whatever's on	**14.7**
I ask someone else/Someone else tells me what's on	**12.1**
From the programme listings on the TV, e.g. Teletext, Electronic Programming Guide	**7.1**
I look up what is on the TV on the internet	**7.0**
I switch channels until I find something I want to watch	**0**
No answer	**1.5**

7.4. Summary

What is clearly shown from the above is that people with learning difficulties/disabilities are much more dependent upon TV to occupy their time than people within mainstream society.

This is a community that watches more TV than average, watches more daytime TV than average and watches more late-night TV than average. It is also an audience which is not always able to have a choice over what it watches.

7.5 Implications for the BBC

Questionnaire responses, focus groups and structured interviews all confirm that within this community there is a devoted TV audience.

The BBC's general approach towards programming for disabled audiences has seen a move away from targeted programmes. This is certainly the case with programming for learning disabled audiences: the regular (three times a week) transmission of *Let's Go*, fronted by the now Lord Rix, on BBC One and BBC Two in the 1970s and 1980s has not been replicated since then. Not that the BBC has entirely given up creating targeted programmes for this community. *Something Special*, which targets the under-5s using Maketon (a simplified sign language), was originally a 2003/2004 commission of four programmes by BBC Education under the title Primary Language Development. Since then, commissioning both by CBBC and BBC Education has turned this into 35 programmes and raised the targeted age group from under 5 to up to 7 years.

Both CBBC and BBC Education say they have had an amazing response. To quote the CBBC producer: "I have never received such a response for a series aimed at children. I have copies of hundreds of emails sent by grateful parents, carers and teachers."

Given this response, it is perhaps not surprising that when research participants were asked what they would like from the BBC, their answers included programmes made specially for people with learning difficulties/disabilities.

What the respondents with learning difficulties/disabilities wanted, however, was not simply worthy or informational programmes but entertainment in which they could take part – for example, magazine programmes in which they could interview celebrities; their own versions of *Big Brother, Stars in Their Eyes* and *Blind Date*; and coverage of the Special Olympics.

What the respondents who worked in the field wanted was targeted programmes that could be used in a 'life skills' learning situation.

People within both the focus groups and the interviews felt that TV, because of its visual nature, was very important to this community and that the community was underserved by current TV programming.

One of the direct requests received during the research was for the use of symbols in TV listings – both in newspapers and on screen – to enable people who had difficulty reading to recognise what was on. This is an area where the BBC could work with the learning disabled community to improve their access.

8   Research findings: TV – what people watch

There were two questions in the questionnaire which looked at what people actually watched. The first asked people to list up to 5 of their favourite programmes, and the second asked them to list their five favourite types of programme. The answers have provided a mass of detail on the watching habits of this community, the highlights of which are outlined below (for the detailed tables and analysis see Appendix 4).

8.1   What type of programmes do people watch?

The differences within Table 17, which lists the top ten genres against gender, are to some degree predictable and shared by the general population. So sport was picked by around 56% of men compared to 21% of women, while more women (70%) chose soaps compared to men (48%).

Table 17: Types of TV programmes preferred – gender profile:
Base: all who watch TV

	Total	Male	Female
Sample base in numbers	**546**	**307**	**239**
Soaps	**57.7**	48.2	69.9
Sport	**40.7**	56.0	20.9
Music	**37.2**	34.9	40.2
Police drama	**35.2**	33.9	36.8
Hospital drama	**30.8**	21.8	42.3
News	**29.9**	33.6	25.1
Wildlife (about animals)	**26.4**	23.8	29.7
Cookery	**26.2**	21.5	32.2
Films	**24.9**	25.4	24.3
Comedy	**20.3**	21.5	18.8
No answer	**5.3**	5.9	4.6

However, there are differences in the genres that people within this community watch compared to those watched by the general population. It has already been noted (Table 13) that people within this community watch more daytime TV than the norm. Therefore it is perhaps not surprising to find cookery within the top ten genres for both men and women. Indeed, quiz and game shows, DIY, gardening and holiday programmes – all very much part of daytime viewing – were selected as being among people's top five preferred type of programme (see Appendix 4).

Table 18: Types of TV programmes preferred – age profile
Base: all who watch TV

	Total	Age 16–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55+
Sample base in numbers	**546**	92	135	161	100	58
Soaps	**57.7**	51.1	64.4	58.4	55.0	55.2
Sport	**40.7**	35.9	42.2	42.2	42.0	37.9
Music	**37.2**	50.0	45.9	33.5	26.0	25.9
Police drama	**35.2**	26.1	40.0	31.1	37.0	46.6
Hospital drama	**30.8**	33.7	28.1	33.5	26.0	32.8
News	**29.9**	21.7	23.7	28.6	39.0	44.8
Wildlife (about animals)	**26.4**	20.7	24.4	24.2	35.0	31.0
Cookery	**26.2**	35.9	22.2	25.5	25.0	24.1
Films	**24.9**	25.0	25.9	23.6	27.0	22.4
Comedy	**20.3**	22.8	21.5	20.5	17.0	19.0
No answer	**5.3**	5.4	3.0	6.8	6.0	5.2

There are in fact comparatively few differences across age groups (Table 18), and those which do exist are perhaps those which can be expected. Music – which within this community usually but not always means a variety of popular music – becomes less important with age and news is more important to the older age groups.

8.2 Favourite programmes

Whilst the answers to "What type of programme do you like?" produced comparatively clear results, the same was not always the case when people started to list their favourite programmes. There are a variety of reasons for this.

The first is that people often did not know the name of particular programmes and, for example, simply put down "animals". So wildlife programmes which feature as their seventh most watched genre (Table 17) do not appear at all within their top ten programmes. This was particularly the case with people watching digital channels: for example WWF, which is an American Wrestling channel, was simply listed as a programme choice.

The programmes which were virtually treated as genres were sport, wildlife, films and children's. Sport, wildlife and films are already included in Table 17 above however, mistakenly. Children's was not listed as a genre option on the questionnaire, though about 1% of respondents did list it under "other". But it is worth noting how much of what is regarded as children's television is watched by this community, certainly predominantly within the younger age brackets but also to some degree across all age groups.

Table 19: People watching children's programmes – age and gender profile
Base: all who watch TV

	Total	Male	Female	Age 16–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55+
Sample base in numbers	**546**	**307**	**239**	**92**	**135**	**161**	**100**	**58**
% watching children's/young people's TV	**13.4**	11.1	16.3	25.0	10.4	14.3	9	6.9

In terms of specific programmes, *Blue Peter* was the most popular with *Scooby Doo* a close second. But people watched everything from *Bob the Builder* and *Teletubbies* to *Goose Bumps* and *Tracy Beaker*.

The second problem is that the filling-in of the questionnaire took place over a six-month period, and programmes which might have been on at prime time and been popular in September were not always the same as those which were being watched in March. Therefore, when comparing this community's choice of programmes against the Barb results for any particular months, some programmes simply will not be present (see Table 21 below).

Tables 20 and 21 compare the programmes watched by this community against the programmes watched by the general population.

Table 20: Top 20 programmes – LD research

BBC LD research top 20 most watched programmes	LD research rating	Barb rating
EastEnders	1	2
Coronation Street	2	1
The Bill	3	14
Emmerdale	4	3
Casualty	5	10
Neighbours	6	72
News	7	18
Top of the Pops	8	105
Holby City	9	19
Home and Away	10	160
Heartbeat	11	4
Ready Steady Cook	12	160
Hollyoaks	13	165
Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?	14	20
Only Fools and Horses	15	62
Strictly Come Dancing	16	13
National Lottery	17	46
Countdown	18	258
The Simpsons	19	75
Ground Force	20	91

Whilst there is overlap between the programmes viewed, particularly in terms of soaps and drama series, nine of the top 20 programmes watched by the general population do not appear in the top 20 programmes of people with learning difficulties. That is not to say that nobody watched them, but simply that the numbers were so small that they did not register.

Table 21: Top 20 programmes – Barb, October 2004

Barb Top 20 programmes October 2004	Barb rating	LD research rating
Coronation Street	1	2
EastEnders	2	1
Emmerdale	3	4
Heartbeat	4	11
Doc Martin	5	0
Himalaya with Michael Palin	6	0
Midsomer Murders	7	24
Foyle's War	8	0
Frances Tuesday	9	0
Casualty	10	5
Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway	11	23
Film: Die Another Day	12	0
Strictly Come Dancing	13	16
The Bill	14	3
The X Factor	15	0
Antiques Roadshow	16	0
Trial and Retribution	17	0
BBC News	18	7
Holby City	19	9
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	20	14

Finally, it needs to be recognised that this community are most likely to remember the names of programmes that they watch regularly rather than programmes that they may enjoy but that are not on for sustained periods of time. People were not asked to rate the programmes in order of preference, so what finally emerges, as can be seen in Table 20, is a pattern of watching that reflects both their interest in soaps and drama series and the fact that they watch a lot of daytime TV.

8.3   What channels are people watching?

Although over 50% of the community had access to digital services (see Table 9), it was the analogue channels that predominated when people were asked to name their favourite channel. BBC One came top, but it needs to be recognised that the fact that this was BBC research may have influenced people's responses.

Table 22: Favourite channels
Base: all who watch TV

	Total
Sample base in numbers	**546**
BBC One	66.6
ITV	56.1
Channel 4	30.4
BBC Two	29.1
Five	27.1
Sky 1	7.2
ITV Digital	5.2
Sky Sports	5.2
BBC Three	4.0
BBC Four	3.4
UKTV Gold	2.9
STV	2.5
Regional TV, e.g. Border	1.6
MTV	1.4
Sky Music	1.4
Sky Movies	1.3
Other	6.1
No answer	11.3

In addition to the channels listed above, people with access to digital services watched a whole range of channels from Crime Plus to Play UK but only in very small numbers.

8.4   Favourite channels across gender, age and geography

Age had no impact on the channels that people watched. Gender did, however, with men being the predominant watchers of Sky Sports (8.5% compared to 0.8% of women); MTV (2.2% compared to 0.4%); Sky Movies (1.9% compared to 0.4); and UKTV Gold (3.8% compared to 1.6%). From this it can be seen that although men and women had roughly equal access to digital services, it was primarily men who used them.

Table 23: Favourite channels – national profile
Base all who watch TV

	Total	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Sample base in numbers	546	418	80	32	16
BBC One	66.6	66.0	52.5	75.0	68.8
ITV	56.1	58.4	28.8	68.8	81.3
Channel 4	30.4	31.1	28.8	6.3	37.5
BBC Two	29.1	28.3	23.8	46.9	37.5
Five	27.1	27.4	30.0	9.4	31.3
Sky 1	7.2	6.9	6.3	9.4	12.5
ITV Digital	5.2	4.6	8.8	0	12.5
Sky Sports	5.2	4.1	11.3	6.3	0
BBC Three	4.0	3.7	6.3	0	6.3
BBC Four	3.4	2.8	5.0	9.4	0
UKTV Gold	2.5	3.0	3.8	0	0
STV	1.4	0.0	17.5	0	0
Regional TV, e.g. Border	1.6	1.8	1.3	0	0
MTV	1.4	1.6	0.0	3.1	0
Sky Music	1.4	1.2	3.8	0	0
Sky Movies	1.3	1.2	1.3	3.1	0
Other	6.1	5.1	10.0	6.3	12.5
No answer	11.4	9.7	23.6	0	12.5

Geography also had an effect on the channels people watched, with participants in Scotland rating BBC One a good 10% lower than people from the other nations; this was more than offset, however, by the 17% who watched STV. The Scots were also the biggest watchers of Sky Sport. This was backed up by their complaints within the focus groups that the BBC did not really provide for people in Scotland from the sport coverage to the news. In Northern Ireland ITV was more popular than the BBC across both analogue and digital channels, but the only SKY Channel watched was Sky 1.

Interestingly, given this community's interest in music and the popularity of *Top of the Pops*, MTV was not heavily watched; perhaps because there is a lack of narrative with almost all the information being provided as text on screen.

8.5   Summary

People selected as their favourite programmes those that they watched most regularly: alongside soaps and drama series this included a surprisingly wide range of genres from wildlife programmes to, mainly in the case of men, sport. This is also a community which consumes more daytime TV than the average and not surprisingly many of their most watched programmes are on during the day. This is a

community where a substantial number of people watch children's programmes throughout their adult life. And this is a community which, although it has access to digital services, still tends to watch analogue channels.

8.6   Implications for the BBC

News and soaps/drama series are dealt with below, so what is considered here is the implications for both Daytime TV and Children's. As noted above, CBBC has, in *Something Special*, already commissioned targeted programmes for children with learning difficulties/disabilities. However given that adults from this community are also watching children's programmes in substantial numbers they might consider whether they could be the first to integrate someone from this community into their on-air team.

In terms of Daytime TV, this report has already looked at the desire both within this community and from those working in the field for targeted programmes (see page 16). Given the large amount of on-screen time available during the day and the fact that substantial portions of this community watch television during the day, this is surely something to be considered.

9 Research findings: news

9.1 Do this community watch the news?

From Table 24 it can be seen that, like much of the general population, this community basically gets its news from TV. This is not only clear from the questionnaires but was also reflected in the focus groups where there was only one person (2.7%) who got the news mainly from the internet and only two (5.5%) who got the news mainly from the radio.

Table 24: Take-up of news within the learning disabled community

	Watched TV	**Listened to radio**	**Used the internet**
Sample base in numbers	**546**	**458**	**230**
% accessing the news	77%	38%	22%

Not only did around three-quarters of this community watch the news on TV, around a quarter rated the news among their top 15 most watched programmes (Table 25). And when asked to choose their top five genres, 30% picked the national news and 19% picked regional news.

Table 25: Preferred types of TV programme: news filter – gender and age profile.
Base: all who watch TV

	Total	**Male**	**Female**	**Age 16–24**	**Age 25–34**	**Age 35–44**	**Age 45–54**	**Age 55+**
Sample base in numbers	**546**	**307**	**239**	**92**	**135**	**161**	**100**	**58**
News	**29.9**	33.6	25.1	21.7	23.7	28.6	39	44.8
Local news	**19.2**	23.5	13.8	14.1	15.6	18.6	25	27.6

However, as can be seen from Table 26, only 30% of people within the BBC research watched the news compared to 83% within the general population.

Table 26: News consumption: learning disabled community compared with general population

Column %	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Age 16–24**	**Age 25–34**	**Age 35–44**	**Age 45–54**	**Age 55+**
LD research	**29.9**	**33.6**	**25.1**	**21.7**	**23.7**	**28.6**	**39**	**44.8**
Barb, 2004	**83.4**	84.7	89.3	68.3	82.4	88.9	88.7	95.1

There are other differences too: in this community men watch the news more than women (which may be accounted for by the fact that more men within this community are at home during the day than men within the mainstream community, whereas in the mainstream community there still tend to be more women at home during the day). The one thing they share is that the news, in both communities, is more popular with those in the older age brackets than with those in the younger age groups.

Finally, it needs to be remembered that for many members of this community TV is probably the only way they can access the news since the majority either cannot read or have a low level of reading ability. They are therefore not able to get the news from newspapers.

9.2 Which news do they watch?

From the focus groups it was clear that everywhere but in Scotland BBC News was watched more often than ITV. In Scotland people thought there was a north/south divide with the south winning out over the north, so they watched STV or, where they had access, Sky News.

Within the questionnaire overall there was a greater sense of national identity in both Scotland and Wales than in either England or Northern Ireland. The news is one of the areas where this appears to influence what people watch.

9.3 What do people who watch the news think of the way it is presented?

Given the importance of the news in terms of the BBC's remit as a provider of impartial and accurate information, the news was not only discussed at the focus groups but also specifically addressed within the questionnaire.

The responses in both situations were clear: while people thought the news was important and found it interesting, a substantial number of this population had trouble fully understanding it.

The most common complaint was that the news used 'jargon'; on further investigation what people meant by this was complicated words. As can be seen from Table 27, in the questionnaire 43% of those who watched the news thought it used difficult words. In the focus groups this feeling was almost universal.

Table 27: Attitudes to TV news – gender profile
Base: all who watch TV news

	Total	Male	Female
Sample base in numbers	**431**	242	189
Interesting	**52.2**	54.5	49.2
Uses difficult words	**43.2**	41.7	45
Goes too fast	**33.6**	34.7	32.3
Easy to follow	**32.3**	33.1	31.2
Contains too much information	**30.2**	26.0	35.4
Too long	**29.2**	28.1	30.7
Boring	**22.0**	18.6	26.5
Too short	**8.6**	8.3	9.0
Other	**8.1**	6.6	10.1

The other complaint about the way the news is presented was that it "jumped around" and "started stories in the middle". What this seemed to mean was that while the news was often perceived to contain too much information (as can be seen from Table 26, this was a complaint from about a third of those who watched the news on TV), it did not, for this community, contain the information which put the story in context. Indeed the news often assumes that people already have quite a lot of information about long-running or ongoing stories, whereas many people within this community need to be reminded of the salient facts each time a story is repeated.

The first focus group raised the fact that they watched and liked the BBC's *Newsround* (on CBBC); this was then explored in subsequent focus groups. There was appreciation of the fact that *Newsround* presented stories in a way that people with learning difficulties/disabilities could understand. What they wanted to know was why this could not be done with the mainstream news stories.

9.4 The differences between local and national news

Although only 19% of people put local news in their top five genres, it was clear from the focus groups and questionnaire sessions that many more people than that watched and enjoyed local news. Possibly the results do not show this because when filling in the questionnaire people did not always make the distinction between local and national news and simply saw them all as news. What people liked about local news was that it more often contained good news stories, that it could on occasion be humourous, and that it told them about what was happening in their area.

As Table 28 shows, there are national and regional variations. Local news was watched more in Wales than in the other nations (indeed more local than national news was watched in Wales). This may be influenced by S4C and the presentation of the news in Welsh: it is possible that people assumed that because it was in Welsh it was local news, which is not necessarily the case.

Table 28: Preferred types of TV programme: news filter – nations profile
Base: all who watch TV

	Total	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Sample base in numbers	**546**	**418**	**80**	**32**	**16**
News	**29.9**	30.1	26.3	31.3	37.5
Local news	**19.2**	18.4	16.3	40.6	12.5

There were large variations in how much people watched local news across the English regions, ranging from a high of 30% in the West Midlands and Yorkshire & Lincolnshire to a low of 6% in the South East. This probably has as much to do with the lives people are leading as with anything specific within local news programmes.

9.5 Attitudes to TV news content

People said that they watched the news because it told them what was going on in the world, and by this they meant everything from what was happening around the world to local weather reports. Different items were of greater or lesser importance to different individuals, but for all of them 'being in touch' with both the larger world and with what was happening where they lived was clearly important. The news provided this.

People were very aware of what had been recent major stories, so both the tsunami and Iraq were discussed. However, the dominant issues were not specific stories but what stories the news focused on and what it left out.

The issue which was most regularly raised was that there was too much bad news and not enough good news. This is not simply an issue for this community. Madeleine Bunting in *The Guardian* (January 2005) wrote: "The news portrays our species as one that murders, squabbles, bullies and dies. No wonder people switch off. ... A recent study in stress at Nottingham Trent University found that watching the news triggered depression, confusion, irritation, anger and anxiety. News comes at the price of your peace of mind." However, what is different for this community is the way that many members of the community take the news personally. For instance, for one participant the reporting of traffic accidents always reminded her of relatives who had died in just such an accident.

The focus groups discussed at length whether or not this meant that they felt that some news items were simply too upsetting to be shown. In the final analysis the vast majority felt that bad news should be shown, but they also felt that some items should not be shown on the 6 o'clock news but should be shown later. They also thought some items should have a 'health warning'. In effect they saw the need for a watershed for the news.

What the focus groups felt was left out was stories about things that affected their lives: there were literally not enough stories about what was happening to people with learning difficulties/disabilities. People gave as examples (no doubt because they were being discussed in Parliament at the same time as the BBC research was being undertaken) the Mental Capacity Bill and the Mental Health Bill and the implications these had for people like themselves. They felt that the news stories had concentrated solely on the mental health issues raised by the bills and had not really dealt with those aspects of the bills which would affect their lives.

No doubt at other times they would have raised other issues.

9.6   Summary

TV is the main, and often the only, source of news for the majority of this community, who are visually orientated and lack reading skills. The community itself values the news both in terms of national and local coverage. However, there is a preference for more good news stories and a feeling that really horrific stories should be kept to later news programmes.

People did not find the news particularly accessible in terms of the language it uses, which was seen as too complicated, and a lack of context to news stories. In general they also felt that the news did not cover sufficiently the stories which are relevant to their lives.

9.7   Implications for the BBC

The major issue concerns the provision of more accessible TV news for people with learning difficulties/disabilities. To some extent the skills and knowledge already exist: the BBC's *Newsround* is a format which works for this community. Indeed *Newsround* may well be a format that works for a whole range of people with limited English.

The skills demonstrated by *Newsround* in giving context and simplicity to news content, married with the knowledge of those who put together national news programmes, could create an accessible news programme.

This is something this community would both welcome and value and which would also meet the BBC's remit as a public broadcaster.

10   Research findings: soaps and drama series

Soaps and drama series are obviously popular with all audiences; however, they seem to be particularly popular with and important to substantial numbers of this community. Within the category of soaps, research participants included some programmes which would not be defined as soaps by their producers. So *The Bill* was defined as a soap by almost everyone and both *Casualty* and *Holby City* were seen as soaps by some people, though not by everyone.

10.1 How important are soaps?

Table 29 compares which soaps/drama series this audience watches compared to their popularity within mainstream audiences by looking at where they were placed within the BBC research and where they were placed by Barb in October 2004.

Table 29: Ratings for soaps and drama series – learning disabled community compared with general population

Programme	Channel	Barb rating	Research rating	Percentage of research participants watching
EastEnders	BBC One	2	1	59.7
Coronation Street	ITV1	1	2	55.3
The Bill	ITV1	14	3	48.5
Emmerdale	ITV1	3	4	41.2
Casualty	BBC One	10	5	28.4
Neighbours	BBC One	72	6	27.3
Holby City	BBC One	19	9	19.4
Home and Away	Five	160	10	16.3
Heartbeat	ITV1	4	11	15.4
Hollyoaks	Channel 4	165	13	8.4
Family Affairs	Five	272	23	2.6
Doctors	BBC One	169	24	2.0
River City	BBC One Scotland	48	25	1.6

NB: River City is shown only in Scotland and was watched by 11% of Scottish respondents.

What is most notable is that all the soaps and drama series listed were within the 25 most watched programmes within the BBC research, while within Barb they are spread out over the top 300 programmes.

10.2 Who watches soaps, across gender, age and race

In the general population soaps are generally watched more by women than by men and, as can be seen from Table 29, so it is with this audience, with marked differences across all soaps other than *The Bill*. There are also differences across age groups: *Home and Away* and *Neighbours* – the two Australian soaps – were less watched by the older age groups, *Hollyoaks* with its target audience of 16 to 24 year olds is obviously succeeding since it was watched more within this age group than within any other. *Emmerdale* was watched more by the older age groups. The one programme that reached all ages and was equally popular across both genders was *The Bill*.

Table 30: Percentage of people watching soaps and drama series – gender and age profile
Base: all who watch TV

Programme	Total	Male	Female	Age 16–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55+
Sample base in numbers	**546**	**307**	**239**	**92**	**135**	**161**	**100**	**58**
EastEnders	**59.7**	49.5	72.8	55.4	61.5	60.9	59.0	60.3
Coronation Street	**55.3**	45.3	68.2	47.8	51.9	60.2	55.0	62.1
The Bill	**48.5**	49.2	47.7	47.8	46.7	51.6	47.0	48.3
Emmerdale	**41.2**	31.9	53.1	35.9	38.5	40.4	42.0	56.9
Casualty	**28.4**	23.1	35.1	32.6	25.2	31.1	26.0	25.9
Neighbours	**27.3**	22.8	33.1	28.3	34.1	30.4	18.0	17.2
Holby City	**19.4**	13.7	26.8	25.0	14.8	19.9	19.0	20.7
Home and Away	**16.3**	10.7	23.4	17.4	21.5	16.1	13.0	8.6
Heartbeat	**15.4**	12.1	19.7	10.9	13.3	15.5	20.0	19.0
Hollyoaks	**8.4**	4.6	13.4	14.1	11.9	6.2	6.0	1.7
Family Affairs	**2.6**	1.3	4.2	1.1	2.2	5.0	2.0	0
Doctors	**2.0**	1.3	3.0	3.3	1.5	1.2	3.0	0
River City (Scotland only)	**1.6**	1.0	2.5	0	3.7	1.2	1.0	1.7

As Table 31 shows, within the research, apart from *The Bill*, *Neighbours* and *Family Affairs*, soaps were generally less watched by people from ethnic minority backgrounds than by white learning disabled audiences.

Table 31: Percentage of people watching soaps and drama series – ethnic profile
Base: all who watch TV

Programme	White	Asian/Black
Sample base in numbers	**509**	**37**
EastEnders	60.0	54.1
Coronation Street	56.5	40.5
The Bill	48.2	51.4
Emmerdale	42.1	29.7
Casualty	29.5	13.5
Neighbours	26.6	37.8
Holby City	20.1	10.8
Home and Away	16.7	10.8
Heartbeat	15.7	10.8
Hollyoaks	8.5	8.1
Family Affairs	2.0	10.8
Doctors	2.0	0
River City (Scotland only)	1.8	0

However, soaps are more popular with people from Asian and African backgrounds within the learning disabled community than they are within their counterpart mainstream ethnic communities. Within the mainstream Asian community only *EastEnders* features in their top 20 programmes; and whilst soaps do slightly better within the mainstream Black community the 5 that do feature all have a considerably lower share than they do within the white community.

10.3 Why are soaps important?

Perhaps more important than how popular individual soaps/drama series are, is why people within this community watch so many soaps and drama series and the role these programmes play in their lives.

The first thing to be noted is the role that routine plays for many people within this community. Routine is often what gives both a structure and a meaning to their lives. As was discovered when trying to get people to fill in questionnaires or come to focus groups, if doing this clashed with something they "always" did at that time, then by and large the BBC research lost out. So one of the things that works to make soaps/drama series so popular is the regularity with which they are on. Some people attending the focus groups had their own TV schedules based around soaps/drama series, and people were eloquent about how much they hated programme transmission times being changed.

Soaps/drama series were discussed in depth both at the focus groups and also during the sessions when filling in the questionnaires. People were remarkably clear about what they liked about soaps, what they did not like and why they watched them.

People liked clear storylines and defined characters. In conversations they were more inclined to talk about *Emmerdale* and *The Bill* than any other programmes, so the fact that *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street* came out as the two most watched programmes was somewhat of a surprise.

People did not like characters who changed suddenly or storylines that they could not follow. *EastEnders* came in for most criticism: people were particularly annoyed at the return of 'Dirty Den' who they felt had 'died' and therefore could not and should not have reappeared. They did not like actors appearing in more than one soap, presumably because it disturbed the link between actor and character. And finally many people had real problems with violence – again mainly within *EastEnders*.

Perhaps most interesting was why they watched these programmes. Without exception those who watched soaps felt that they were about everyday life: that you could learn from them about family relationships and how society worked. Indeed one person said he watched *Neighbours* because he could learn about what it was like to live in Australia from it.

What this seems to mean is that these programmes contained recognisable characters living in a world that people saw as 'real' and doing things that people understood. Given that this community often lacks a wide range of relationships, so that many people tend only to meet people who are paid to work with them, their own families or other people with learning difficulties/disabilities, soaps/drama series obviously give them entry to whole areas of life that they would not otherwise have access to.

Much of the above can be seen as positive, but there are also a number of negatives as people who worked in the field made clear and indeed as some people themselves recognised.

First was the way that watching soaps/drama series occupies vast amounts of people's time so that there is little chance of persuading them to do anything else. This is particularly true of those who watch both daytime and evening soaps. Within this community many who watched the soaps felt unable to miss an episode (often including the omnibus editions). As has already been noted, this is a community in which routine plays a large part and it is easy to build a routine around TV programmes which are on at the same time each day/week. From a broadcaster's perspective this may well be a sign of success, but if broadcasters keep increasing the number of episodes of soaps eventually they will, in a community like this, take over people's lives completely.

Second, many people in this community did not clearly distinguish between fact and fiction so although they knew to some degree that these were characters on TV, nevertheless in many ways they were very real to them. This led to people copying or aping behaviour – the fact that it happened in a soap meant that they could also behave like that. Obviously, given the storylines and behaviours in soaps, this led to some very difficult situations which had to be dealt with by their families and support workers.

This is a community which quickly relates things to their own lives: as can be seen from the discussion on the news above, people within this community often take things very personally. One support worker almost involved Social Services because her client kept bursting into tears and talking about someone who had been beaten up. She thought her client was involved in domestic violence. Fortunately she found out in time that the person getting beaten up was a character in *EastEnders*, not a member of her client's family.

Finally, the absence of people with learning difficulties/disabilities from soaps/drama series meant for some people that they were not part of real life. People felt this very keenly and it is discussed further in the section on portrayal below. But what was clear was that many people within this community held TV personally responsible for many of the bad things that happened in their lives – like the person who had been beaten up 11 times in one year and said that "if we were in these programmes people would know not to do this to us."

It is open to debate whether TV really has the power that people within this community feel it has. However, faced with a community who are heavy consumers of TV and who feel this strongly about TV, then this research surely shows that it must at least be a debate worth having.

10.4 Summary

Soaps and drama series are very important to this community, with 13 coming within their top 25 most watched programmes. On the positive side soaps provide entertainment, fill people's time and open up aspects of life that are not otherwise always available to this community. On the negative side they can eat away at people's time and provide negative role models.

Most significantly, this audience does not see itself currently represented in soaps and drama series and it regrets that invisibility.

10.5 Implications for the BBC

The research findings confirm that people with learning difficulties/disabilities value what those who make *EastEnders, Holby City* and so on strive to achieve, namely:

• the clarity of each story line within the whole
• the need for characters to be clearly defined and behave in character
• the realism of the stories.

However, what the research also raises is the issue of the responsibility that programme makers have to those who watch their programmes and may be adversely affected by them. Clearly programme makers need to be aware of the possible effect of their programmes on people within this community who are among the most vulnerable people in society.

Currently, when dealing with difficult storylines it is customary to provide support or action lines, but often the way these are announced would not be clear to many members of this community. Something much simpler along the lines of "If you have been upset by the things which happened in the programme then you can phone..." is needed, and possibly a recognition across the whole broadcasting industry that there may be more need for support of this kind than people currently think.

Finally, the BBC needs to look at integrating people with learning difficulties/disabilities into these programmes. This is not a suggestion that they necessarily become main characters or carry the storyline – though this may on occasion be appropriate – but that in the first instance people with learning difficulties/disabilities simply become part of the TV population in these very popular programmes. There is a lot of potential within the field of extras, from a hospital porter in *Casualty* to someone who drops into the Queen Vic for a beer with his mate.

This is a community who believe in the power of TV to make their lives better – perhaps the BBC could prove them right.

11   Portrayal on TV

Since this research focused on people with learning difficulties/disabilities as media users or members of audiences, the questionnaire did not ask questions about representation or portrayal. However, as might be expected, since everyone appeared to be only too aware of the lack of people with learning difficulties/disabilities on screen, the issue of portrayal was raised during the questionnaire sessions, in the focus groups and in the interviews.

Perhaps the first thing to be noted was people's almost total recall of when people with learning difficulties/disabilities had featured in soaps and drama series. This ranged from the short-lived character in *Crossroads* to the episode of *Frost* that was devoted to a story about a couple with learning difficulties/disabilities.

Equally to be noted is that when people with learning difficulties/disabilities themselves talked about past examples of representation they, in the first instance, were always referring to the presence on screen of someone with Down's syndrome. So while both *Flesh and Blood* and episodes of *Holby City* had featured characters with learning disabilities other than Down's syndrome (which were recalled by a few people in the interviews and by support workers), they did not in the same way register with the community itself. However, once people started to remind themselves of what had been on screen they did get round to instances such as the above.

Given that people with Down's syndrome were in no way over-represented within the research, this is perhaps simply a way of people saying that they want to clearly recognise that the character being portrayed is someone with a learning difficulty/disability. This recognition is almost always instantaneous with someone who has Down's syndrome, which is not necessarily the case with people with other learning disabilities/difficulties.

The arguments put forward by participants about why there should be more people from this community on screen were twofold.

Firstly, people held television responsible for how they are viewed in society. Whether it is true or not, they believed that if there were more programmes on TV that showed people with learning difficulties/disabilities then this would effect a change in society's understanding of themselves and their community. On a very practical level they felt strongly that if the general population understood more about people like themselves then they would not be so open to being bullied and attacked.

Secondly, they saw it as an issue of fairness and accessibility. As they pointed out, they paid the licence fee, they watched TV and they simply could not understand why they did not see themselves, or their community, in any way reflected in what was on television. They felt this most strongly when it came to issues that affected them directly. So, for instance, they felt that news items dealing with issues around learning disabilities/difficulties should include someone who understood the issue from their perspective (i.e. someone with a learning difficulty/disability).

Whilst, as has already been described, this is an isolated and disadvantaged community, over the recent years it has become much more politicised and willing to speak up for itself. This has been reinforced by *Valuing People* which lays great emphasis on developing networks of self-advocacy. Therefore this is no longer a community without ambition.

This ambition included news made by themselves for themselves (as they pointed out, Deaf people have this so why couldn't they?); a *Question Time* where they could ask questions of politicians about issues that concerned them; coverage of the Special Olympics and, as has already been mentioned (page 16), a whole raft of entertainment programmes made in versions where they could either take part or be the entire show.

11.1 Summary

People with learning difficulties/disabilities want to see themselves and their issues on TV. They feel that if there were more programmes on TV which showed people with learning difficulties/disabilities then this would change the way society treats them. Finally, they feel that this is a matter of fairness – they are part of society and should be seen as such.

11.2 Implications for the BBC

This research has already shown that this is a community which depends on television, and they are right in their perception that they are hardly ever represented on it.

At the BBC, the Television Disability Portrayal Policy is clearly making a difference: recently *Ready Steady Cook* had a contestant with a learning difficulty/disability as a way of acknowledging the Special Olympics. (This was after the research had taken place, otherwise it is certain that people would have mentioned it, *Ready Steady Cook* being a daytime programme that this community watch.) However, it is a policy where the targets are across all disabilities.

The issue for the BBC is, could it respond to this community in the same way it looks to meet the needs of the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities, both through targeted programmes and through inclusion?

12   Research findings: education

This research set out to get the views of people with learning difficulties/disabilities, aged 16 and over, about the BBC's current output and services. However, during the course of the research it became clear that the one BBC department that regularly targeted people within this community was BBC Education and therefore it is worth briefly looking at what it does in this area.

Since BBC Education provides programmes for young people in schools it is not surprising that it has created programmes specifically for young people with learning difficulties/disabilities. *Something Special*, which was aimed at under-fives, has already been mentioned, but previously there was *Go For It* aimed at teenagers. This was a series of programmes which covered a range of life skills from fashion to interpersonal relationships. Commissioned from 1996 to 1999, there were 23 programmes over four series, each aimed at a different age group (from 11 to 16+). Like the majority of BBC Education's output, these programmes, once broadcast, were available to schools in tape form on a cost-recovery basis. During the course of this research the programmes were viewed by people working within the field who found them really useful and wanted to know why the BBC had not advertised their existence.

Currently BBC Education is developing the digital curriculum, and, in doing so, is committed to ensuring that the result is as accessible and as inclusive as it is possible to be given the current state of technology. What this means in effect is that there will be special commissions to ensure that students with special education needs (including those with learning difficulties/disabilities) are able to achieve levels of learning appropriate to their age and abilities. This will not be a situation where one size fits all.

The limitation of what BBC Education currently does is that it is focused on educational institutions, whereas education for many people within this community is both ongoing and often takes place in non-educational institutions. For instance, basic numeracy, including the ability to handle money, is something that people within this community might be learning in their thirties in a Learning Disability Team (that is within the NHS). This is certainly the kind of issue that BBC Education would cover as part of the digital curriculum, but there is no reason to suppose that people heading up Learning Disability Teams would be aware of that fact.

12.1   Implications for the BBC

BBC Education has a high-level commitment to accessibility but this is limited to being accessible to those within educational institutions. People with learning difficulties/disabilities often have many of their educational needs met within the NHS, by charities and through Social Services. These are all very separate networks and do not necessarily have any links with educational networks.

Given the lack of resources available to this community it would seem logical that BBC Education should market its work to the organisations and networks involved with the education of people within this community.

13 Research findings: radio

As must already be clear, this community, because it responds more easily to visual than written or aural information, is TV-orientated. Thus 98% watch TV compared to 82% who listen to the radio. They also spend an average of 4.62 hours per day watching TV compared to an average of 2.74 hours per day listening to the radio.

13.1 Consumption of radio

Members of this community listened on average to less hours of radio per day than did those within the general population (table 32) however the difference was not great being 0.4 hours per day. The only other difference was that young people within this community are more likely to listen to the radio than young people within the general population: 3 again the difference was 0.4 hours per day.

Table 32: Average hours of listening – learning disabled community compared with general population (Rajar, 4th quarter)

	Hours per head – Rajar	**Average hours per head – LD research**
All adults	3.1	2.7
Men	3.3	2.9
Women	2.9	2.6
Age 15 to 24	2.7	3.1
Age 25 to 34	2.8	2.7
Age 35 to 44	3.1	2.6
Age 45 to 54	3.4	2.4
Age 55+	3.3	3.3
White	3.2	2.8
Black/Asian	2.5	2.6

There were no meaningful differences in how many hours per day people with learning difficulties/disabilities spent listening to the radio in terms of either gender or ethnicity. There were, however, differences relating to age (Table 33) with people over 55 listening to more radio hours per day than those under 55. Indeed, 11% of the 55+ age group listened for more than eight hours per day.

Table 33: Hours listening to the radio – age profile
Base: all who listen to radio

	Total	**Age 16–24**	**Age 25–34**	**Age 35–44**	**Age 45–54**	**Age 55+**
Sample base in numbers	**458**	**80**	**114**	**125**	**88**	**51**
Less than 2 hours a day	**55.7**	48.8	50.9	63.2	63.6	45.1
3 to 4 hours a day	**26.4**	27.5	34.2	17.6	23.9	33.3
5 to 7 hours a day	**10.0**	13.8	8.8	11.2	8.0	7.8
8 hours or more a day	**6.1**	7.5	3.5	6.4	4.5	11.8
No answer	**1.7**	2.5	2.6	1.6	0	2.0

However, 55% of those who listened to the radio (46% of those taking part in the research) listened to less than two hours of radio a day, so compared to TV this was a minority interest within this community.

13.2 When do people listen to the radio?

Table 34 shows that, in terms of radio listening, 31% listened only on weekdays or only at weekends, leaving around two-thirds of the community listening both during the weekend and on weekdays. In the general population, 16.8% listen to the radio only during the week and 1.6% listen only at the weekend; 83.2% listen to radio both during the weekend and during the week. This is another indication that the learning disabled community is listening to far less radio than the rest of the population.

Table 34: Times of radio listening – gender profile
Base: all who listen to the radio

	Sample base in numbers	Weekdays only	Weekends only	Both weekdays and weekends	No answer
Total	**458**	**13.3**	**17.7**	**66.6**	**2.4**
Male	**269**	13.0	17.5	67.3	2.2
Female	**189**	13.8	18.0	65.6	2.6

The majority of radio listening within the general population and within this community is done in the morning (Table 35).

Table 35: Times of radio listening – learning disabled community compared to general population research

	General population	LD Research
Mornings	85.3	57.0
Afternoons	79.1	32.8
Evenings	63.6	49.6
Night-time	27.6	15.5

Within the general population, breakfast-time listening accounts for a third of all radio listening hours, whereas within the learning disabled community listening is spread out much more evenly throughout the day.

When people listened to the radio was not affected by gender, race or location. It was, however, affected by age, particularly in terms of those under 24 and those over 55 (Table 36), with the younger age group listening more in the evening and late at night and the older age group listening more in the mornings.

Table 36: Times of radio listening – age profile
Base: all who listen to the

	Total	Age 16–24	Age 55+
Sample base in numbers	**458**	**80**	**51**
Mornings	**57.00**	52.5	72.5
Afternoons	**32.8**	32.5	35.3
Evenings	**49.6**	62.5	47.1
Night-time (11pm to 6am)	**15.5**	17.5	7.8
No answer	**1.3**	1.3	2.0

Surprisingly, there was remarkably little impact as to when people listened to the radio compared to how they spent their time (Table 37). Those who worked full time listened to the radio less in the mornings and afternoons and more in the evenings, but apart from that the pattern of listening was pretty much the same across all areas of activity.

Table 37: Time and activity while listening to the radio
Base: all who listen to the radio

Activity	Sample base in numbers	Mornings	Afternoons	Evenings	Night-time
School/college/ employment training	197	55.8	33.0	50.8	15.2
Day centre	284	57.4	32.0	44.4	12.7
Arts/ sports centre	90	56.7	36.7	43.3	13.3
Work full-time for money	20	45.0	25.0	75.0	15.0
Work part-time for money	74	62.2	40.5	52.7	17.6
Work as a volunteer	92	56.5	39.1	46.7	18.5
Staying at home	109	67.0	35.8	45.0	16.5
Going out and about	8	87.5	50.0	62.5	12.5
Total	458	57.0	32.8	49.6	15.5

13.3 Who chooses what to listen to

As with TV, people do not always get to choose what they listen to. Indeed, as Table 37 shows, people within this community would seem to have rather less choice about what they listen to on the radio than they do when choosing what to watch on TV.

Table 38: Who chooses what : TV compared with radio

	Sample base in numbers	I decide	Someone else decides	A mixture of the two	No answer
Radio	458	67.7	15.5	15.9	0.9
TV	546	57.7	9.0	32.8	0.5

As with TV, who gets to choose is affected by where people live (Table 39) and also, as with TV, the people who get least individual choice are those living at home with their parents.

Table 39: Who decides what to listen to – type of residence profile
Base: all who listen to the radio

	Total	**Independently in your own home/with a partner**	**On your own in supported housing/ independent living centre (group home)**	**At home with your parents/ family**	**In a residential care home/in a hospital**
Sample in numbers	**458**	**80**	**111**	**206**	**59**
I decide	**67.7**	73.8	70.3	62.1	74.6
Someone else decides	**15.5**	11.3	12.6	18.0	16.9
A mixture of the two above	**15.9**	13.8	16.2	18.9	8.5
No answer	**0.9**	1.3	0.9	1.0	0

The way that the majority of the population listen to the radio is different from the way that people watch TV, and this is also the case within this community. So people do not necessarily select particular programmes as they do with TV but rather they listen to types of programmes. Table 40 shows that, when it comes to radio, over half of those listening either just turn the radio on and listen to whatever is on (a reflection in part of the fact that radios are often left tuned to people's favourite stations) or they tune it until they hear something they like.

Table 40: How people choose what to listen to
Base: all who listen to the radio

	Total
Sample base in numbers	**458**
I know when my favourite programme is on	**22.7**
I ask someone else/someone else tells me what is on	**11.1**
I just turn on the radio and listen to whatever is on	**35.2**
I change stations until I find something I want to listen to	**17.0**
I look at listings magazines, e.g. Radio Times/newspaper	**7.4**
From the programmes listings on TV, e.g. Teletext, EPG / I look up what is on the radio on the internet	**3.5**
No answer	**3.1**

13.4 Summary

Whilst people within this community watch a lot more TV than people within the general population, they listen to slightly less radio. The pattern of when they listen to the radio mirrors that of the general population in that most radio listening takes place in the morning, but unlike the general population their listening is spread more evenly throughout the rest of the day.

Despite the fact that the majority (88%) of people who listen to the radio have radios in their room, radio listening is clearly something which happens in communal situations. This is reflected by the fact that only two-thirds of those who listen to the radio make an individual choice as to what to listen to, so 33% are either making an input into a communal choice or simply listening to what someone else has put on.

14   Research findings: what radio output do people listen to?

When people within this community listen to the radio they are in the main (96.3%) listening to music. The tables below highlight the kind of music people are listening to – for a detailed analysis of people's preferences and how it is affected by ethnicity and geography see Appendix 5.

From the research it is clear that, no matter what age people are, no matter where they come from, and whatever their gender or racial origins, the majority of this community listen to pop music. While there is some tapering off within this as people get older (down from 87% to 65%), it is nowhere near the kind of drop that exists within the mainstream population where the average age of Radio 1 listeners is 28 years.

Differences which do relate to age (Table 41) are that people within the older age bracket listen to more country and western music, more folk music and more religious music than those who are younger.

Table 41: Top ten types of music preferred – age profile
Base: all who listen to music on the radio

	Total	Age 16–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55+
Sample base in numbers	**441**	**77**	**112**	**121**	**80**	**51**
Pop music	**78.7**	87.0	80.4	76.9	80	64.7
Rock music	**35.4**	36.4	35.7	37.2	37.5	25.5
Country and Western	**33.8**	15.6	24.1	36.4	47.5	54.9
Classical music	**24.0**	28.6	19.6	21.5	30.0	23.5
Jazz	**18.1**	15.6	16.1	18.2	21.3	21.6
Soul music	**15.2**	9.1	14.3	14.9	25.0	11.8
Reggae music	**15.0**	9.1	14.3	17.4	22.5	7.8
Folk music	**14.1**	11.7	6.3	9.9	22.5	31.4
Rap/hip hop	**14.1**	18.2	10.7	17.4	11.3	11.8
Religious music (gospel, hymns)	**13.8**	10.4	9.8	8.3	21.3	29.4

Music was not the only thing people listened to on the radio (Table 42). People used the radio to listen to news, with local news being slightly more listened to than the national news, and to sport. However, those listening represented less than a third of those taking part in the research. And even though people wanted programmes about learning difficulties/disabilities on TV, when it came to programmes on radio that might cover such subjects then less than 5% of those taking part in the research would be likely to be listening.

Table 42: Top ten non-music preferences for radio listening – gender and age profile
Base: all who listened to radio

	Total	Male	Female	Age 16–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55+
Sample base in numbers	**458**	**269**	**189**	**80**	**114**	**125**	**88**	**51**
Local news	**38.4**	39	37.6	35.0	39.5	39.2	36.4	43.1
News	**38.0**	42	32.3	31.3	34.2	38.4	44.3	45.1
Sport	**37.1**	48.3	21.2	43.8	38.6	32.8	36.4	35.3
Interviews with celebrities	**19.9**	17.5	23.3	22.5	22.8	24.8	14.8	5.9
Quiz shows	**18.8**	20.4	16.4	28.8	20.2	20	11.4	9.8
Soaps e.g. The Archers	**18.1**	18.2	18	17.5	14.9	19.2	18.2	23.5
Phone-in shows	**17.7**	18.6	16.4	18.8	14.9	18.4	19.3	17.6
Comedy	**17.7**	18.2	16.9	22.5	19.3	18.4	14.8	9.8
Talk radio e.g. BBC Radio 4	**12.0**	14.5	8.5	8.8	11.4	11.2	14.8	15.7
Plays	**10.3**	8.6	12.7	11.3	8.8	12.8	6.8	11.8

The differences across gender and age in the choice of listening are those which would be expected: more men listening to sport, people in the older age brackets being more likely to listen to news, and indeed to talk radio in general, and the younger generation being more interested in celebrity. All of these reflect patterns of listening within the general population

There were no notable differences in what people listened to based on race or geography, apart from within the area of news where people in Wales and Northern Ireland listened to considerably more news than those in Scotland and England.

14.1 Accessing radio programmes

Phone-in programmes were the seventh most popular type of programme with this audience and, as Table 44 shows, 12% of those listening to the radio had tried to take part in a phone-in programme.

Table 43: Participation in radio phone-in programmes – gender and age profile
Base: all who listen to the radio

	Total	Male	Female	Age 16–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55+
Sample base in numbers	**458**	**269**	**189**	**80**	**114**	**125**	**88**	**51**
Yes, I have tried to take part in phone-in programmes	**11.8**	13.0	10.1	11.3	12.3	12.0	11.4	11.8

Of those trying to take part in a phone-in programme, around a third did not get through, around 50% got on air and around a fifth were unhappy about the way they were treated.

There was a similar pattern for people contacting radio and TV stations to get information, with two-thirds getting the information they wanted and with 15% being unhappy about the way they were treated.

People did not always remember what programme they had tried to contact, though about a third appear to have been on local radio stations. It was mainly people contacting local commercial radio stations who were unhappy with the way they were treated.

14.2 What radio stations do people listen to?

The radio stations most listened to by this community were not very different to those listened to by mainstream society. Table 44 compares the top ten stations listened to by people taking part in the research with the percentage listening to these stations within the general population. As can be seen, the big differences are those listening to sport radio (higher within the learning disabled community) and those listening to digital radio (again higher within this community).

Table 44: Preferred top ten radio stations – learning disabled community compared with the general population

Channel	LD Research	General population
Local commercial radio	39.7	54.3
BBC Radio 1	32.5	21.2
BBC Radio 2	24.5	25.0
BBC local radio	23.8	19.1
National commercial radio	22.4	27.1
BBC Radio Five Live	15.9	11.5
BBC Radio 4	13.3	17.3
Classic FM	10.0	11.8
BBC Radio Five Live Sport Extra	8.3	0.6
talkSPORT	7.0	3.9

Local radio, both commercial and BBC, was popular with this community: people knew the names of local presenters and obviously felt connected to the local stations in a way that they did not to national stations

Table 45 looks at the top ten radio stations people listened to by age. As might be expected given this community's interest in pop music, in general local commercial radio stations were the most listened to stations followed by BBC Radio 1 and Radio 2. The exception to this was people in the older age bracket where BBC local radio was the most listened to followed by BBC Radio 2.

Table 45: Favourite radio stations – age profile
Base: all who listen to radio

	Total	Age 16–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55+
Sample base in numbers	**458**	**80**	**114**	**125**	**88**	**51**
Local commercial radio	**39.7**	46.3	46.5	35.2	38.6	27.5
BBC Radio 1	**32.5**	35.0	28.1	36.0	35.2	25.5
BBC Radio 2	**24.5**	20.0	18.4	22.4	33.0	35.3
BBC local radio	**23.8**	12.5	23.7	28.8	19.3	37.3
National commercial radio – pop music based	**22.4**	25.0	22.9	22.4	19.4	21.6
BBC Radio Five Live	**15.9**	16.3	15.8	16.0	18.2	11.8
BBC Radio 4	**13.3**	11.3	10.5	10.4	20.5	17.6
Classic FM	**10.0**	13.8	8.8	8.8	9.1	11.8
BBC Radio Five Live Sport Extra	**8.3**	8.8	7.0	9.6	8.0	7.8
talkSPORT	**7.0**	6.3	5.3	5.6	11.4	7.8

The only substantive differences across gender (Table 46) were with regard to sport radio, with men being four to five times more likely to listen to than women.

Table 46: Preferred radio stations: sports filter – gender profile
Base: all who listen to the radio

	Total	Male	Female
Sample base in numbers	**458**	269	189
BBC Radio Five Live Sport Extra	**8.3**	11.9	3.2
talkSPORT	**7.0**	10.4	2.1

Table 47 shows the differences in listening patterns according to racial origin. As can be seen, people from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to be listening to BBC 1Xtra or BBC Asian Network than those who were white.

Table 47: Preferred radio stations: ethnic minority services filter – ethnic profile
Base: all who listen to radio

	Total	White	Asian/Black
Sample base in numbers	**458**	421	36
BBC 1Xtra	**2.2**	1.9	5.6
BBC Asian Network	**2.0**	0.7	16.7

The differences according to geography centre around the same three radio stations (BBC 1Xtra, BBC Asian Network and BBC World Service). Whilst these differences are interesting they are not ones for which there is any obvious explanation, given that all the participants within the research from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were white.

Table 48: Preferred radio stations: ethnic minority services filter – national profile

	Total	**England**	**Scotland**	**Wales**	**Northern Ireland**
Sample base in numbers	**458**	**350**	**69**	**25**	**14**
BBC 1Xtra	**2.2**	2.3	0	8.0	0
BBC Asian Network	**2.0**	1.7	2.9	4.0	0
BBC World Service	**1.5**	1.5	2.9	0	0

14.3 Summary

96% of those who listen to the radio use it to listen to music. Age, race and geography affected the music people chose to listen to but they all seemed able to find the music they wanted on radio.

Not surprisingly, given the interest in pop music, the most listened to stations were local commercial radio stations, followed by BBC Radio 1 and Radio 2. People liked local radio, both commercial and BBC stations, and clearly felt that they had a connection with them that they did not have with national stations.

The next most popular programmes after music are news (both national and local) and sport (particularly for men). However, only a third of this community listen to the news on radio and even fewer than 10% listen to what can be termed issue-based talk radio, that is programmes that cover everything from history to culture and are where disability issues are likely to be discussed.

Portrayal on radio was not raised as an issue. However, some 12% of those listening tried to access phone-ins or get information on radio programmes. The majority did this successfully but there were those who either did not get through to the radio station or, when they did get through, were unhappy with the way they were treated.

14.4 Implications for the BBC

There are two issues for the BBC. The first is to ensure that all local radio staff and those working within music radio (Radio 1 and Radio 2) are equipped to take calls from this community. The BBC is obviously at present doing reasonably well on this as Radio 1 was the only BBC station that anyone taking part in the research mentioned as not having treated them in a way that they found acceptable. However, this may result more from luck than from people having had appropriate training.

Second is the fact that when the BBC covers stories about this community it generally does so on Radio 4. Whilst it is important that this community's stories are told so that the rest of society begins to understand the people within the community, it is a fact that members of the community itself want their stories to be told on TV. So whilst the good practice of Radio 4 is to be welcomed it does not solve the issues of portrayal which surround this community.

15   Research findings: the internet

15.1 Who uses it?

In the UK population as a whole, internet users are predominantly young (20% in the 15–34 age group compared to 12% in the 55+), male (54% compared to 46% female) and better off (The Source, 2004). Roughly 50% of the adult population of the UK regularly use the internet.

The BBC research found (Table 49) a larger bias towards use by young people (62% of those in the 16–24 age group compared to 37% in the 35–44 age group, going down to 27% for those aged 55 and over). There was a similar bias towards use by males (43% male compared to 38% female) and an overall lower level of usage (41.1% of this community compared to 50% in the general population), which may to some degree be a reflection of the fact that members of this community are more likely to be economically disadvantaged.

Table 49: Use of the internet – gender and age profile
Base: all who took part

	Total	**Male**	**Female**	**Age 16–24**	**Age 25–34**	**Age 35–44**	**Age 45–54**	**Age 55+**
Sample base in numbers	**559**	**316**	**243**	**98**	**138**	**162**	**102**	**59**
Yes, use the internet/www	**41.1**	43.4	38.3	62.2	45.7	37.7	28.4	27.1
No, do not	**58.5**	56.3	61.3	37.8	53.6	62.3	71.6	71.2
No answer	**0.4**	0.3	0.4	0	0.7	0	0	1.7

There were also differences of usage across nations and across BBC English regions.

Table 50: Use of the internet – national profile
Base: all who took part

	Total	**England**	**Scotland**	**Wales**	**Northern Ireland**
Sample base in numbers	**559**	**426**	**85**	**32**	**16**
Yes, use the internet	**41.1**	43.4	32.9	28.1	50.0
No, do not	**58.5**	56.1	67.1	71.9	50.0
No answer	**0.4**	0.5	0	0	0

It is not possible to be absolutely definitive about why these variations exist. In the case of Northern Ireland it is likely that the greater take-up is a reflection of the fact that the group in Northern Ireland were all under 35. However, age and gender variations do not explain the low take-up in Wales and Scotland, which at 28% and 33% respectively is considerably lower than the 50% take-up within the mainstream population. It is possibly a reflection of the resources available to learning disabled communities in those areas, or at the very least an indication of what people working with this community have chosen to prioritise.

The differences across the English regions (see Table 51) are even greater, ranging from an 11% level of internet usage among those in the South East to 69% among those in the North East and Cumbria.

Table 51: Use of the internet – English regions profile
Base: all who took part

BBC region	Sample base in numbers	Yes, use the internet	No, do not	No answer
	559	41.1	58.5	0.4
East Midlands	**23**	21.7	73.9	4.3
East	**37**	43.2	56.8	0
London	**88**	43.2	56.8	0
North East and Cumbria	**29**	69.0	31.0	
North West	**40**	45.0	52.5	2.5
South East	**18**	11.1	88.9	0
South	**51**	51.0	49.0	0
South West	**23**	52.2	47.8	0
West Midlands	**45**	35.6	64.4	0
West	**18**	55.6	44.4	0
York	**41**	46.3	53.7	0
Yorkshire and Lincolnshire	**13**	23.1	76.9	0

However, these results are nearly all explicable in terms of the research itself. The high percentage of usage in Cumbria probably results from the fact that one participant group was based in a college. The comparatively high results in the West and South West probably result from the fact that the research took place with groups from the Home Farm Trust – an organisation which has prioritised the use of computers. And finally, in Yorkshire two participants groups were arts-based and used computers within their work.

What this illustrates is that for this community access to the internet is over-dependent on external factors (from whether people go to college to what organisations exist in any specific area) over which members of the community themselves do not necessarily have any control.

Whilst the above, at first glance, shows around a 10% lower level of usage for this community compared to usage by the general UK population, it needs to be looked at in terms of what 'internet use' actually means for this community. The reality is, as Table 52 shows, that only 64 people – that is 11% of the total taking part in the research and around 28% of those using the internet – used it by themselves; everyone else required support.

Table 52: Type of support needed in using the internet – gender and age profile
Base: all who use the internet

	Total	Male	Female	Age 16–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55+
Sample base in numbers	**230**	**137**	**93**	**61**	**63**	**61**	**29**	**16**
Nobody, I can use it by myself	**27.8**	**27.7**	**28.0**	**27.9**	**31.7**	**27.9**	**27.6**	**12.5**
My family/friends/ partner	**20.0**	18.2	22.6	37.7	20.6	14.8	3.4	0
My support worker/ college staff	**54.3**	54.0	54.8	50.8	47.6	55.7	62.1	75.0
Work colleague	**2.6**	2.9	2.2	1.6	1.6	1.6	3.4	12.5
No answer	**1.3**	1.5	1.1	0	1.6	1.6	3.4	0

It is to be noted that although young people (16–24 age group) with a 62% take-up (Table 49) are much more likely to use the internet than other age groups, they are equally unable to use it without support.

The majority, around two-thirds, of this support, is provided by professionals, with the other one-third being provided by family, friends and work colleagues. However, the training for the majority of support workers and other professionals working with this community does not as a matter of course include IT skills.

15.2 Where do people use it?

The other substantive difference between this community and users of the internet within mainstream society is where they access it. Table 53 compares the two (the figures for the general population are from The Source, 2004).

As can be seen there is a much lower level of access at home within the learning disabled community (45% compared to 80%), and, as might be expected in a community where fewer people work, a much lower level of access at work (17% compared to 32%).

Table 53: Internet: main places of access, by UK location

	At work	**At home**	**Other**
General population	32%	80%	28%
People with LD	17%	45%	79%

Though the above is not equally true of all ages, Table 54 shows that there is a greater level of home use amongst the younger age group, though at 54% still not as high as that within the mainstream population.

Table 54: Where people access the internet – gender and age profile.
Base: all who use the internet

	Total	**Male**	**Female**	**Age 16–24**	**Age 25–34**	**Age 35–44**	**Age 45–54**	**Age 55+**
Sample base in numbers	**230**	137	93	61	63	61	29	16
At home	**45.2**	45.3	45.2	54.1	44.4	41.0	41.4	37.5
In school/college	**33.5**	28.5	40.9	54.1	22.2	21.3	41.4	31.3
At a day centre/ social group	**29.6**	28.5	31.2	13.1	38.1	34.4	27.6	43.8
In an internet café	**11.3**	10.9	11.8	4.9	11.1	18.0	13.8	6.3
At work	**17.0**	16.8	17.2	11.5	17.5	24.6	6.9	25.0
At the library	**4.8**	5.8	3.2	3.3	3.2	6.6	3.4	12.5
Other	**2.2**	1.5	3.2	3.3	3.2	1.6	0	0
No answer	**1.7**	2.2	1.1	1.6	4.8	0	0	0

As can be seen, the lack of access at work is to some degree compensated for by the use of the internet in those places where people spend their time: in day centres, at a range of social projects, and in education (colleges and schools). However, the majority of day centres are unlikely to have a situation where everyone can have access to a computer (a common situation in many work places) or to be staffed by people trained in IT.

This is not so true of educational establishments which will have trained staff and more adequate computer provision, and this is where 54% of the younger age group access the internet. In fact, the younger age groups show that this community is beginning to catch up with the mainstream population, since they are both using computers within education and at home.

15.3 Access and what it means

The whole issue of usage of the internet by people with learning disabilities/difficulties, as for many disabled people, is overshadowed by the issue of accessibility both in terms of the accessibility of the websites themselves and the level of the resources available to this community. The following section summarises the issues and gives the findings of the research. It is, however, not a complete survey of the state of the accessibility of the internet in terms of learning disabled communities.

When BBC New Media commissioned Systems Concepts in 2000 to undertake research on the accessibility of the BBC websites, the group who found BBC websites most inaccessible were people with learning disabilities/difficulties. This is reflected in what this research found: a comparatively low level of usage and the need for support when accessing the web. The reasons for this are not hard to understand:

• This is a community where the majority either do not read or have access only to simple language.

• This is a community who prefer to use pictures or visual imagery, and even when they use text they still prefer it to be accompanied by pictures. Indeed as a community they use a number of different graphic-based languages (Change Picture Bank, Widget, Boardmaker, etc) and, either as individuals or in groups, they will often change the graphics they are presented with to create their own versions. So there is not at present one shared visual language.

• This is a community who like and need clarity and simplicity: simple pictures or graphics; straightforward navigation (large buttons or icons); simple language and not too much text; uncluttered pages, and an ability to convert text to audio.

In contrast to the above points, the web is still text-based, and its pages frequently carry a mass of information with numerous different styles of organisation and presentation. People need IT skills to navigate it and they even need IT skills to make it more accessible. This presents real access problems for the learning disabled community: for example in the focus group dedicated to this topic, which consisted solely of internet users, when asked what would make the web more accessible most people immediately said larger text size. Despite the fact that six out of seven of those present had done some form of IT training, they had either not learnt or had forgotten how to set up a computer to enlarge text and yet this was, on their own admission, basic in terms of making web pages more accessible.

Equally, this group would in many cases benefit from text-to-word conversion packages (such as JAWS) and yet none of those participating in the research seemed to have easy access to such packages and very few people providing the support seemed to have prioritised providing this kind of assistive technology.

There has been some work done on making the web more accessible to learning disabled communities. Widgit (a graphics-based language company) is about to launch Webwide which will download, simplify and convert websites to Widgit. However, Widgit is a language and like all

languages (visual and verbal) it has to be learnt. Although it has been around for some 20 years, it is only used within certain fields and by some organisations – for example learning disability teams may use it in total communication work, and it is used in Mencap colleges. It is difficult to say what impact Webwide will have but it is the first piece of assistive technology specifically designed for use by this community and therefore bears further consideration.

Peepo is an icon-based navigation system providing a portal to the web. However, although it assists access to websites, it does not make the pages more accessible once reached, so it is not in that sense an assistive technology – although without doubt it would be useful to a range of organisations working with people with learning disabilities/difficulties.

However, for any community that is so visually orientated it is the growing presence of broadband that has the greatest potential to make the web more accessible, as it not only allows the downloading of images, video sequences and so on but will, as it becomes universal, influence web design, encouraging a greater presence of pictures, photographs, etc. Unfortunately people with learning difficulties/disabilities who are most likely to benefit from broadband are also least likely to be able to afford it. Whenever the topic came up – including at the focus group – people were clear that £10 a month was a possibility, but anything beyond that was more than they could afford.

15.4 Summary

People within this community have a lower level of internet usage than the general population (around 40% compared to 50%). The majority of those who do use the internet need support in doing so, with only 11% of all those taking part in the research and around a quarter of those who use the internet able to do so by themselves.

The community has a lower level of access at work and at home, compensated for in part by access in day centres or social groups and in education establishments. Whilst there are some service providers, projects and organisations that have recognised the potential of IT in terms of a range of work with this community and are therefore providing IT skills and access to computers, this is not currently the norm. Even where IT is being prioritised this is not as yet specifically in terms of the internet, although use of the internet is more likely to follow in those situations where people have regular and ongoing use of computers.

The lack of internet usage must to some degree result from the inaccessibility of the internet in its present form: predominantly text-based pages, usually crammed with information and with no clear navigational guide. What this community needs is web pages based around pictures or graphics, with simple text and with large buttons for navigation.

Currently there exists no proven assistive technology that can provide all of this. Possibly the best answer lies in broadband, which will hopefully encourage a greater use of pictures and graphics, but unless it becomes considerably cheaper it is unlikely to be an option for the majority of this community.

16   Research findings: what do people use the internet for?

Table 55 shows what people use the internet for. The most popular websites are those concerned with celebrity: this can mean anything from gossip pages about the lives of the famous to fan club membership sites. Women, with over a 50% interest, are keener on celebrity sites than men who record only a 35% interest. The other major gender difference is in terms of an interest in sport which, as with the rest of the UK population, is still more a male (40%) than a female (15%) interest.

Table 55: What people use the internet for – gender and age profile
Base: all who use the internet

	Total	**Male**	**Female**	**Age 16–24**	**Age 25–34**	**Age 35–44**	**Age 45–54**	**Age 55+**
Sample base in numbers	**230**	137	93	61	63	61	29	16
Celebrity gossip (pop stars, film stars)	**43.0**	35.0	54.8	52.5	44.4	34.4	34.5	50.0
Information about your hobbies	**42.6**	42.3	43.0	54.1	33.3	45.9	37.9	31.3
To send and receive emails	**37.0**	37.2	36.6	41	31.7	34.4	48.3	31.3
To listen to music	**33.9**	36.5	30.1	41	39.7	26.2	31	18.8
Online chat rooms/ to play games	**32.6**	34.3	30.1	42.6	30.2	32.8	27.6	12.5
Sports information	**30.0**	40.1	15.1	37.7	25.4	29.5	31.0	18.8
Disability information	**23.9**	22.6	25.8	18.0	27.0	27.9	34.5	0
News (including weather and travel information)	**22.2**	24.8	18.3	21.3	30.2	21.3	13.8	12.5
To watch TV	**21.7**	24.1	18.3	24.6	27	21.3	13.8	6.3
Information about what's on at the cinema	**20.0**	18.2	22.6	31.1	20.6	14.8	13.8	6.3
Educational information	**13.9**	15.3	11.8	11.5	11.1	18	13.8	18.8
Holidays	**13.9**	13.9	14.0	9.8	14.3	14.8	17.2	18.8
To listen to the radio	**12.6**	13.9	10.8	14.8	14.3	9.8	13.8	6.3
Health information	**11.3**	10.2	12.9	11.5	12.7	9.8	13.8	6.3
Shopping	**10.0**	10.9	8.6	16.4	6.3	9.8	0	18.8
To look for work	**8.7**	8.0	9.7	8.2	7.9	8.2	10.3	12.5
Political information	**7.4**	9.5	4.3	1.6	12.7	9.8	3.4	6.3
General learning	**0.4**	0	1.1	0	0	1.6	0	0
Other	**4.3**	4.4	4.3	1.6	4.8	4.9	6.9	6.3
No answer	**4.3**	2.9	6.5	0	4.8	3.3	10.3	12.5

Apart from the focus on celebrities, people with learning disabilities/difficulties use the web much as most of the general population do, for a whole range of activities that reflect their individual interests from getting information about hobbies to listening to music or playing games.

Less than a quarter of those using the internet use it to access what might be called hard factual information from the news to information about health, politics and so on. However, like the rest of the population, people within this community are using the internet to watch TV and listen to radio.

There are a number of websites created specifically for this community such as Common Knowledge, based in Glasgow and acting as a focus for people with learning disabilities/difficulties across Scotland, and the Dutch site www.ookjij.nl/home.swf, which provides web-based learning in Holland. Work is also ongoing: currently Mencap, in collaboration with Vodaphone, is developing a celebrity-orientated accessible website covering soaps, pop music and film stars, and Central England People First is working on an accessible news site.

16.1 Do people visit bbc.co.uk?

Given the interest in celebrity, soaps and sport, and the fact that this community listens to radio stations and watches TV on the web, it is not surprising that 44% of those using the internet had accessed BBC sites (Table 56).

Table 56: Use of BBC website – gender and age profile
Base: all who use the internet

	Total	Male	Female	Age 16–24	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55+
Sample base in numbers	230	137	93	61	63	61	29	16
Yes, have visited the BBC website	47.4	51.0	41.9	63.9	46.0	37.7	34.5	50.0

Table 57 shows that the top ten reasons for using BBC sites are pretty much the same as the top ten reasons for using the web in general, though in a slightly different order of priority and allowing for the specifics of the BBC.

Table 57: Use of BBC websites compared with use of the wider internet

	Total users of BBC websites		Total users of internet sites
Sample base in numbers	**109**	**Sample base in numbers**	**230**
Celebrity gossip (pop stars, film stars)	**38.5**	Celebrity gossip (pop stars, film stars)	**43.0**
Sport	**37.6**	Information about your hobbies	**42.6**
To listen to music	**30.3**	To send and receive emails	**37.0**
Information about your hobbies	**29.4**	To listen to music	**33.9**
Information about TV/ radio programmes	**28.4**	Online chat rooms/ To play games	**32.6**
News (including weather and travel information)	**26.6**	Sport information	**30.0**
To play games	**24.8**	Disability information	**23.9**
To send emails to the BBC	**21.1**	News (including weather and travel information)	**22.2**
Disability information	**19.3**	To watch TV	**21.7**
Watch BBC TV programmes online	**18.3**	Information on what's on at the cinema	**20.0**

There were, however, considerable differences in terms of people visiting BBC sites across the nations (Table 58) and across BBC English regions.

Table 58: Use of BBC websites – national profile
Base: all who use the internet

	Total	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Sample base in numbers	**230**	**185**	**28**	**9**	**8**
Yes, have visited the BBC website	**43.9**	40.5	46.4	77.8	75.0

A much larger percentage of people in Northern Ireland and Wales visited BBC websites than in England and Scotland. However, it is debatable what, if anything, this means given the low numbers involved, though it is to be noted that the BBC has a higher approval rating in Wales and Northern Ireland than in England or Scotland.

The effect of the very low numbers of internet users in some English regions meant that the differences in use of BBC sites across the various regions were exaggerated and therefore are not looked at here in detail.

16.2 Summary

The most visited sites were those dealing with celebrities, followed by sites about people's hobbies, and sites about sport. People also used the web to send emails, listen to music, play games and take part in chat rooms. Less than a quarter of those using the internet used it to access what might be called hard factual information from the news to information about health, politics, and so on. However, like the rest of the population, people within this community were using the internet to watch TV and listen to radio.

Around half of those using the internet had accessed BBC websites, and the sites they accessed pretty much reflected the same interest as shown in their use of the internet in general.

16.3 Implications for the BBC

It is worth stating again that around 60% of this community has no access to the internet at all, and of the 40% who do use the internet the majority (around three-quarters) need support to do so.

The issue for the BBC is what can be done to make BBC websites more accessible to this community.

The BBC is already working to ensure that its web pages are accessible to a range of disabled communities. The BBC sees accessibility as a partnership between site producers like itself and the creators of the operating system, the browser, and the specialist assistive technologies.

The BBC is committed to providing an Accessibility Help Site which will guide users in customising their computers (either by explaining the accessibility features of their operating system or browser, or by introducing them to the range of assistive technologies available) to provide them with the most accessible web experience, not just for BBC sites but for all websites.

For people with learning difficulties/disabilities, some of the existing assistive technologies, which allow people to change font sizes or turn text into spoken words, are very useful, and information about how they work would be welcomed. However, the only possible piece of assistive technology specifically aimed at this community is Widgit, and therefore broadcasters should look at the potential of Widgit as an assistive technology to improve access to their websites.

Equally in providing the Accessibility Help the BBC needs do so in such a way as to ensure that people with learning difficulties/ disabilities can access it, understand it and **use it**.

It should be recognised that whatever work is done on accessibility, it is unlikely that the majority of broadcasters' web pages would become fully accessible to this community without alternative versions being produced. This is true even for those already using the internet by themselves and is even more true of those who access the internet with support. The BBC has already recognised that the specific accessibility needs of some disabled user groups might well require it to do just that. Therefore the question is: should this be something that is prioritised for this community and, if so, what areas should broadcasters focus on and what resources should they invest to do this?

Currently the one area where the BBC is committed to providing accessible alternative content for this community is within the digital curriculum, though as yet exactly what the content will be has not yet been decided. There is clearly an argument, given the BBC's responsibility to provide accurate information to everyone, that we should be doing something similar within the news area. Indeed, within *Building public value* there is a commitment to "use new media and some of the BBC's most popular services to attract hard-to-reach groups, young people in particular, to an intelligent news abd current affairs agenda". This community is certainly a hard-to-reach group. However, as can be seen from the way they use the internet and from the section on news within this report, this community does not primarily get its news from the web. Like most people, they get it from TV and this is where the community wants and needs access.

The community's own priorities in terms of web use are celebrity sites, their own hobbies and sport. It is arguable therefore that the sites of which the BBC should produce accessible versions are those based round soaps, pop stars and music. But it is doubtful that this is the best use of the BBC's resources. Given that organisations working in the field are already starting to produce their own websites which are clearly aimed at and likely to be used by this community, it is at least arguable that in the first instance what the BBC should do is form partnerships with these organisations.

In terms of the Mencap/Vodaphone site there is obviously potential for entertainment, drama series and music departments (particularly Radio 1 and Radio 2) to provide information for the site in the kind of format that is required to ensure access. News (both local and national) could work with Central England People First in terms of its news website. And BBC *Where I Live* sites could develop links with local self-advocacy groups.

Such working partnerships would have benefits for both sides: the BBC could offer its skills, knowledge and information, and the external partners could demonstrate how access actually works for this community, and what their priorities are for information on a day-to-day/week-to-week basis. From such working partnerships it might prove necessary to move on to change the BBC's own sites, or the BBC might find that a partnership way of working had much to recommend it.

17   Research findings: what people actually wanted the BBC to do

As part of the research, people were asked to identify the one thing they would most like the BBC to do. Most of what people wanted is already covered by this report. However, as a reminder of what people within this community actually wanted, the points are summarised below:

• Show more programmes and documentaries about people with learning difficulties/disabilities in order to educate mainstream society about the issues that exist for the learning disabled community.

• Have programmes, like celebrity gossip shows, made by people with learning difficulties/disabilities for people in this community.

• Cover the Special Olympics.

• Make more opportunities for people with learning difficulties/disabilities to appear on screen.

• Have a BBC news programme that used less jargon and was accessible to people with learning difficulties/disabilities.

• Make programmes specially for this community around the issues that concern their lives.

The above were asked for by individual after individual, and are a powerful statement of the changes that people within this very marginalised community would like the BBC to make.

Appendix 1   The methodology

The intention of the research was to gather information about how people with learning difficulties/disabilities operated as BBC audience members and BBC service users. It was decided from the outset that the research would not include the huge range of people who are defined has having learning disabilities but would focus on people who had conditions such as Down's syndrome. The research would therefore concentrate on people with low IQs but would not cover people with dyslexia, etc.

From the literature review and the mapping of the learning difficulty/disability population, it was clear that historically there was a lack of market research amongst this group. Indeed there was, and is, a lack of market research companies with both research and learning disabilities expertise.

It was clear that getting valid information from this community meant involving both members of the community and their facilitators. And, since this is a vulnerable community which often works through a range of advocates, from parents to health professionals, there was a need to devise ways in which people with learning disabilities/difficulties could put forward their own opinions of the BBC's output.

Therefore, while the techniques used to collect the information were in no way unusual – they included questionnaires, focus groups and structured interviews – the particular difficulties of doing meaningful research with this group meant that the actual approach needed to be considerably different from general audience research and that the techniques needed to be adapted to suit the community.

Having looked at the above, it was decided that the research needed to be led in house, by which is meant by members of the BBC Diversity Centre with the support of BBC Audience Research, and by people with learning difficulties/disabilities.

1.1   How the research was informed

To ensure that the research would be informed by people with learning difficulties/disabilities, links were established with self-advocacy groups and specifically People First. Having received input from People First Kentish Town, a London based self-advocacy group, from Mencap and from the recently established MEdia, it was decided that the best way to truly find out what people with learning disabilities/difficulties wanted from the BBC was to use the approach developed through person-centred planning.

Person-centred planning has at its core the wishes and aspirations of the individual. It basically requires a shift by planners, researchers and so on away from being a person with a power over relationship to being a person with a power with relationship. This approach formed the basis of the research so that people with learning disabilities/difficulties were involved at all stages, from the design of the questionnaire to the editing for the final report.

1.2   MEdia (formerly Learning Difficulties Media)

MEdia was itself undertaking questionnaire-based research looking at the relationship of people with learning difficulties with the media.

Whilst there was a degree of overlap, after reviewing the two questionnaires and the objectives of the research both sides concluded that:

a) the aims of the two pieces of research were very different (the BBC's was to look at what this community actually watch/listen to/access; MEdia's was to explore the relationship between this community and the media)

b) the actual areas being covered were different (MEdia was interested in all media including print and mobile phones; the BBC's research focused on TV, radio and the internet)

c) the uses that the research will be put to are very different (the BBC's, whilst hopefully useful to the broadcast media in general, will primarily be used to look at BBC policies in this area; MEdia's will be used to establish its future work programme)

However, despite the differences there was and is a commitment to sharing the findings in ways that are useful to both MEdia and the BBC and to involving MEdia in the focus group stage of the BBC research.

1.3   The questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed in conjunction with People First Kentish Town in such a way as to ensure that it was accessible to a cross-section of the learning disability/difficulty community. It was therefore both graphics-based and text-based and consisted of closed questions, i.e. simple yes/no answers and multiple choice tick questions. For a copy of the questionnaire and the invitation letters, see Appendix 2.

1.4   What the research hoped to identify

From the questionnaire, it was hoped that the BBC would identify:

• the leisure pursuits and areas of interest of this community
• the usage of the TV, radio and internet by this community
• the level of autonomous use by this community across TV, radio and the internet
• the level of 'involuntary' use of the above by this community
• which sections of BBC output are regularly used
• the least popular areas of BBC output
• whether the BBC is satisfying the needs of those with learning difficulties/ disabilities in terms of the types of programmes available and when they are scheduled

1.5   The pilots

Once developed, the questionnaire was piloted with People First Kentish Town and London Borough of Greenwich Social Services in order to identify any potential problems.

The first pilot was with People First Kentish Town: it had a total of nine participants, two support workers and three members of the BBC research team. The group were responsible for running the session themselves in a way that would work for them; the BBC members were there purely as observers and helpers for those who needed support with filling in the questionnaire. The session lasted just under four hours including a short break.

The pilot with People First Kentish Town did not produce clear answers and those taking part were tired out by the process. The reasons why this pilot did not work were:

a) The questionnaire session was held in a room that was relatively cramped with respondents seated in a circle in the middle of the room. The chairs were of a variety of heights and types, with some people sitting on ordinary desk chairs while others sat on typist chairs – so people were not comfortable.

b) There were no tables available for the respondents to lean on.

c) The meeting was not robustly chaired by People First. On a number of occasions BBC staff needed to intervene in order to move things forward.

d) The system of logging responses was complex and did not work. Each of our nine respondents was given a unique number. For every answer given, the facilitator would log their number against the appropriate question on a specially devised sheet. However, the participants would regularly change their minds about an answer, which was not always captured by the facilitators. This meant that the numbers of responses were skewed and that questions sometimes had to be repeated to ensure that facilitators had the right number of responses for each question.

Taking on board many of the issues raised by the first pilot, the decision was taken that the BBC research team would chair the second pilot in Greenwich. The second pilot had eight participants, two support workers, one convener and two members of the BBC research team. The day ran extremely well and smoothly. The most surprising aspect of it all was that the questionnaire was completed in one and a half hours instead of the predicted three hours. The original estimate was that it would take a full day, with lunch breaks and so on, to fill in the questionnaire and this is what the original invitation letter had proposed.

The Greenwich pilot worked because:

a) There was a good ratio of facilitators/helpers to participants.

b) Everyone sat around a table and had a questionnaire in front of them – there were no other distractions, which meant that participants could focus on the questionnaire.

c) The questionnaire session was robustly chaired. Each question was read aloud and everyone had an opportunity to answer the same question at the same time. This meant that everyone kept roughly to the same point in the questionnaire, making it possible to deal with queries and move on at the same time.

d) The group knew each other and the session was held in an environment that was familiar to them, so people were comfortable

The above method of running the sessions was applied throughout the research.

A number of problems were thrown up by the questionnaire during the pilot:

a) Where questions ran over more than one page, such as question 9 on TV genres, it became clear that whoever chaired the sessions needed to explain this before people started to answer the question, otherwise all five ticks would be put on page 1 without people realising that there was a page 2.

b) In picking radio genres people tended to forget that this was the radio section and started to think it was about TV. Again, the person doing the chairing needed to remind people of this.

c) More complicated was the issue of whether people had their own TV and who decided what should be watched. Having had discussions around this it was decided that by "own TV" what was meant, in terms of people living in supported situations, was a TV in their own room, not a TV in a communal lounge. The same applied to people living in a family situation – that is, with their parents. However, where people were in a partnership a TV in the lounge, for example, would count as their own TV. Anyone living in a communal situation could, in the researchers' view, at best only answer "A mixture of the two" to question 6. And anyone who wanted to answer "I decide" in that situation needed to be able to explain how that worked in practice.

d) The list of what people do on the internet was poor. This was later improved by the Audience and Consumer Research part of the team.

1.6　The questionnaire sessions

The pilots confirmed that filling in the questionnaires in groups with individuals and with the proper level of facilitation would provide the quality information the research needed. So while provision was made for individual people to complete questionnaires by post, it was assumed that the majority of the questionnaires would be filled in at meetings where both the BBC researchers and facilitators were present and assisting people with the filling-in process.

Initially it had been hoped that Mencap and People First would be able to identify around 15 groups with an appropriate geographic spread who could be visited either at one of their regular gatherings or at a specially convened meeting to fill in the questionnaire. Both Mencap and People First used their newsletters to publicise the research and an advert was placed on the BBC's own website Ouch!, but this failed to generate the required level of interest. The decision was therefore taken to find organisations through Social Services, through charities, and via a number of disability networks including Mencap and People First. Every organisation that was contacted received an invitation in an accessible format (see Appendix 2) outlining the reason for the research and how they could get involved. The intention was to locate organisations that could pull together 15–30 people at one time, but the reality was that this was seldom the case and hence the research ended up needing many more visits than was originally intended. However, because the questionnaire could be completed in around two hours, it became possible to fit two small groups into one day, thus making it easier to deliver the numbers needed.

The average time people could spend on filling in the questionnaire in one go was around 90 minutes. Beyond this point the respondents tended to get tired, restless and in some cases less willing to continue with the completion of the questionnaire. Therefore, there was a break at the halfway stage to prevent this happening.

Being aware that the questionnaire session would no doubt affect the groups' ongoing programme, it was decided that the cost of the research should be borne by the BBC to ensure that groups were not be out of pocket and were able to take part. In reality not every group needed the BBC to meet their costs, but many did. The BBC also provided all the necessary support, bringing pens and name tags and either arriving with the questionnaires or sending them in advance.

1.7   Sampling

Sampling was one of the key challenges of this project. The data needed to be demographically representative of the BBC's nations and regions and demographically representative of people with learning difficulties/disabilities.

Table 1 below illustrates both the initial targets for questionnaires and the final results.

Table 1: BBC nations and regions against questionnaires required for demographic accuracy and questionnaires actually collected

BBC region	Returns targeted	Returns actual
Scotland	41	85
Wales	23	32
Northern Ireland	14	16
East Midlands (Derby, Nottingham and Leicestershire)	18	23
East (Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Bedfordshire, Bucks, Herts)	34	37
London	95	88
North East and Cumbria (Cumbria, Newcastle and Cleveland)	28	29
North West (Merseyside, Manchester and Lancashire)	56	40
South (Oxford, Berks, Hants, Dorset)	50	51
South East (Kent, Surrey, Sussex)	18	18
South West (Devon, Cornwall, Guernsey, Jersey)	16	23
West (Bristol, Somerset, Wiltshire, Swindon, Gloucestershire)	18	18
West Midlands (Hereford & Worcs, Coventry, Shropshire, Staffs, Stoke)	50	45
Yorkshire (North Yorkshire, Leeds, Sheffield)	37	41
Yorks and Lincs (Humberside and Lincs)	14	13

The differences in Table 1 between what was required and what was collected in terms of the North West can be explained in part by the fact that around 12 questionnaires were lost in the post. However, most of the variations are due to the infrastructure in any given area, and the number of participants who actually chose to turn up and take part – not always the same as the number expected. As an example, in Scotland there was a range of well-networked organisations, which accounts for the fact that not only were an additional ten questionnaires collected in Scotland but a further 34 were returned by post.

In total, there were 34 group sessions including sessions in group homes, day centres, drop-in centres and Gateway clubs, and with self-advocacy groups. Appendix 3 lists all the organisations that took part. A total of 559 questionnaires were collected (49 of them by post) over a five-month period between September 2004 and February 2005, from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Once collected, the data was input, and the information contained within this report is drawn from its analysis.

1.8   The focus groups

There were six focus groups, each consisting of five or six participants, one of which was devoted entirely to the discussion of the internet. All the sessions took place in BBC buildings, with three in London, one in Birmingham, one in Manchester and one in Glasgow. Participants in the focus groups were identified during the questionnaire sessions: a list of those who took part in the focus groups can be found in Appendix 3.

The main aim of the focus groups was to explore issues using, in part, information gained from the questionnaires, and in part information gained through talking to individuals during the questionnaire sessions. Therefore, the focus groups looked at specific issues such as why some programmes were more popular than others, and explored what, if anything, people within this community would like the BBC to provide.

Participants were provided with key questions in advance. All the questions related to TV since by this time it was clear that TV was the most important medium for this community. Each session lasted between two and two and a half hours. On average participants spent 30 minutes discussing each of the questions below.

1. What do you think about the news on TV and what, if any, changes would you like?

2. What do you think people with learning difficulties like about soaps?

3. What ONE thing would you like the BBC to do to make things better?

As mentioned above, a separate session was held in London on the internet and the questions were as follows:

1. Do you think that the internet is a good or bad way of getting information to people with learning difficulties?

2. What are the areas that the internet does well and what are the areas where it is difficult?

3. What needs to be done to make the internet more accessible?

Jonathan Hassell, Head of BBC New Media, who has special responsibility for standards and guidelines, attended our session devoted to the internet. This group differed greatly from the previous ones in that people were given laptop computers to use in order to demonstrate the nature of the problems. This enabled Jonathan to see many of the difficulties that people were having first hand.

Support workers and facilitators were also present but they were not invited to participate in the discussions.

1.9   Structured interviews

Our research consisted of a number of parts that enabled us to gather data and information from people with and without learning disabilities/difficulties. The first and second part focused on people with learning disabilities/difficulties, and the third part took the form of structured interviews geared towards opinion formers and workers in the field. This enabled us to look at their views about what the media in general, and the BBC in particular, should be delivering, and to compare this to what people with learning difficulties themselves both watched and would like to watch. This meant that the BBC would be in a position to construct a policy/strategy which delivers to the community in question but is also seen to fulfil its remit as a public broadcaster.

On average, the structured interviews took 30 to 45 minutes to complete and explored with our selected interviewees the same issues as were explored in the focus groups. Below are all of the questions that were asked:

1. How do people with learning disabilities/difficulties access the news?
2. How accessible is the current provision?
3. What changes could be made to this provision to improve the service?
4. What role do soaps play in the life of people with learning disabilities/difficulties?
5. What is the role of the internet, if any, within this community?
6 What one thing could the BBC do to improve its service to this community?

1.10 TV, radio and internet logs

In the original proposal, it was intended to have 12 specially selected individuals living in residential homes and Mencap Gateway clubs to keep TV, radio and internet logs over a one-week period, in order to see whether their answers matched up with the information gathered from the questionnaire. However, it quickly became obvious that the information from the questionnaire was accurate and therefore it was decided that the logs would not add anything useful to the overall research.