INVESTMENT IN HIGH QUALITY CONTENT
Channel 4’s primary function is to deliver its public service remit. Central to that remit is our investment in a broad range of high quality TV programmes, films and digital content.

Investing in content

£675m £510m

total content spend (3%) originated content investment (+2%)

10.5% 73%

viewing share across the viewing share across the TV channel portfolio (%) of the main channel peak time schedule devoted to first run originations (%) 

2018 ambitions

- 2018 will be a strong year for our scripted content, with a combination of returning titles, such as Humans and No Offence, alongside big new ambitious drama series. These include The First, created by Beau Willimon, about the first human mission to Mars, and Kiri, a four-part drama set in Bristol about the abduction of a child, written by Jack Thorne and starring Sarah Lancashire.

- Film4 will continue to invest in proven, quality filmmakers with a unique vision. Film4-backed films launching in 2018 include Martin McDonagh’s BAFTA and Oscar-winning Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri, Lynne Ramsay’s You Were Never Really Here, and John Cameron Mitchell’s How To Talk To Girls At Parties.

Our 2018 ambitions

- Our approach to creativity distinguishes us from other broadcasters. We take more risks and we nurture and harness the best creative talent on and off screen, and from across the UK, in order to find the best ideas and pioneer new programme ideas and formats.

- This shines through our content in everything that we do – from creative, risk taking documentaries that tackle controversial subjects, through dramas that reflect the realities of contemporary Britain, to backing feature films with great potential, and much more.

- Our ability to engage audiences and make an impact is dependent on great ideas being generated within a thriving and diverse production sector. Therefore, a core part of our mission is to strengthen the production sector both by supporting companies directly and by commissioning impactful, distinctive content that draws in sizeable audiences and revenues that can in turn be reinvested into more great content.

- In 2017, despite a challenging advertising market, we increased our investment in new content. This enabled us to continue to deliver world class programmes across all genres and continue to support the UK production sector.
In 2017, Channel 4 protected its investment in the creative economy, despite a challenging economic backdrop, with the advertising market declining 3% year-on-year. We spent a total of £675 million on content, with a record £510 million spent on originated content.

Reflecting Britain’s cultural diversity is central to all that we do at Channel 4, and we continued to showcase this diversity in many of our most popular hits, including Educating Greater Manchester, First Dates and Gogglebox. Successful new shows included Ackley Bridge (see case study on page 37), Lego Masters and Loaded, as well as the much-awaited transfer of The Great British Bake Off to its new home on Channel 4. Amongst a number of high quality acquisitions, The Handmaid’s Tale was one of the most acclaimed shows of the year globally.

2017 was a year of many creative highlights, with returning and new programmes that stood out in an increasingly congested broadcasting landscape, which is a threat to Channel 4, as an incumbent. As a result, we maintained a strong lead over our public service broadcasting competitors on all of our key remit measures, and the public’s perception of Channel 4 remains strong.

Our investment in quality content ensures that we can both deliver our remit as well as attract large, engaged audiences. This is exemplified by our high-profile sports content, which delivered distinctive programming to viewers throughout the year. It peaked during a sensational summer of sport which featured the 2017 British Formula 1 Grand Prix, the London 2017 World Para Athletics Championships and the UEFA Women’s EURO 2017 football championships.
A strong year for drama

Channel 4 is the home of innovative, high-profile drama. Taking on new work from the best-established and emerging writers, our drama slate offered a surprising, thought-provoking and entertaining alternative to the programmes shown on other channels and platforms.

Our dramas encourage audiences to look at the world through a different lens. This year, alongside our continuing series Hollyoaks and No Offence, we created a new hit in the shape of youth-focused Ackley Bridge, a new school-based series set in a multicultural academy in Yorkshire – our first 8pm drama since The Mill, in 2014. Other highlights included Philip K. Dick’s Electric Dreams, an ambitious Amazon co-production that saw the stories of Philip K. Dick adapted by some of the UK and the US’s most exciting talent, including Steve Buscemi, Sidse Babett Knudsen, Richard Madden, Bryan Cranston and Tuppence Middleton. Other highlights included Loaded, an original comedy-drama by Jon Brown; and Born to Kill, a haunting psychological thriller about family and psychopathy set in a rural British town.

We also launched one of the freshest and most talked-about programmes of 2017, The End of the F***ing World, one of our most ‘binge-watched’ programmes of the year, which was co-produced with Netflix and stunt-launched on Channel 4 and All 4.

Authorship is at the heart of our drama, and we are always searching for new, original voices in writing and filmmaking. In 2017, we continued to run a number of talent development programmes, including 4Stories, 4Screenwriting, The Channel 4 Playwright Scheme and The Channel 4 and Northumbria University Writing for TV Awards – read more about our talent initiatives on page 41.

“[The State shows that Channel 4 is the essential broadcaster, which runs the dramas and documentaries that others run from.”]

Nick Cohen
Standpoint (September 2017)

The State

A compelling, fictional story based on extensive research, The State, which aired in August 2017, is a powerful four part drama that follows the experience of four young British men and women who leave their lives in the UK behind to join Isis.

Written and directed by Golden Globe and BAFTA Award winner Peter Kosminsky, and produced by Archery Pictures, the drama is a prime example of Channel 4 investing in distinctive, high quality content.

The State was always going to be a controversial drama and one intended to stimulate debate. Independent research found that three quarters of viewers believe that this is the sort of programme Channel 4 should be showing.

The programme was a success with the public, reaching a total of 5.5 million viewers, or 9.2% of the TV population. It was particularly successful at attracting BAME viewers, who were up by 134% against the slot average.

Although it proved a difficult watch for many, a notable eight out of ten viewers polled by research agency Other Lines agreed that it was good to see controversial yet important issues – such as modern extremism – being confronted and explored through a mainstream drama in a way that they hadn’t seen before on TV. 65% of viewers also said that the drama made them think about the process of radicalisation in a different way (rising to 69% with younger viewers).
Trump: An American Dream

One year on from the US election, a major four part specialist factual series, Trump: An American Dream, charted President Donald Trump’s long rise to power across five decades as a businessman, developer and media star before reaching the White House.

Commissioned by Channel 4 and co-produced with Netflix, Trump: An American Dream was made by UK indie producer 72 Films, as an epic exploration of one of modern America’s most extraordinary lives.

Through the eye witness testimony of 50 friends and enemies, and with a treasure trove of rare and revelatory archive, the series helped viewers to better comprehend the Trump phenomenon and stimulated debate on a range of issues surrounding his rise to power.

This documentary series is a good example of the co-production model, with the external financing enabling us to produce a more substantial and in-depth documentary than we otherwise would have been able to.

The four episodes captured the attention of UK audiences, attracting 6.4 million viewers across the series, before being released by Netflix outside of the UK.

“Ad made account of an unusual ascent.”

The Telegraph

Co-productions

2017 saw a rise in the number of programmes that were co-produced with partners, a key part of our content strategy as budgets in genres such as drama are rising.

Co-productions enable us to work with on-demand platforms and distributors – such as Netflix, Hulu, all3media and FremantleMedia – to make innovative, world-class content together. In each of our co-productions, we ensure we retain editorial control over these programmes which, after premiering on Channel 4, may move on to SVOD services, or other platforms in the UK and sold internationally by distributors.

A growing number of scripted and non-scripted genres tap into this innovative model, including Drama (Philip K. Dick’s Electric Dreams, co-produced with Sony Pictures Television and Left Bank Pictures, and The End of the F***ing World, co-produced with Netflix) and Documentaries (Trump: An American Dream, co-produced with Netflix).

This trend towards co-productions illustrates the appeal of Channel 4’s distinctive editorial input and taste: our co-production partners are investing in our expertise, knowledge and network of talented writers, producers and actors. For platforms looking to appeal to similar demographics to our audiences, Channel 4’s taste palate and experience is attractive. For us, these partnerships enable us to bring larger-scale and ambitious productions to our audiences.
Investment in film

Our investment in film continued in 2017 with a bold and diverse slate of films. As a vital supporter of British film, Film4 has a strong track record of working with the most distinctive and innovative talent in the UK, developing and co-financing many award-winning films, including past Academy Award-winners such as Lenny Abrahamson’s Room, Asif Kapadia’s Amy, Steve McQueen’s 12 Years a Slave, Phyllida Lloyd’s The Iron Lady, and Danny Boyle’s Slumdog Millionaire among others.

Film4’s investment strategy, which was expanded in 2016, now allows us to take a bigger financial stake in films such as Martin McDonagh’s Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri (released in the UK in early 2018), which was co-financed on an equal basis with Fox Searchlight and looks set to do excellent international business.

Our strategy is to back creative excellence and primarily invest in British content and British filmmakers, enabling them to realise the vision they have for their films.

Film4-backed films released in UK cinemas in 2017 include: Ang Lee’s Billy Lynn’s Long Halftime Walk, Ben Wheatley’s Free Fire, Rungano Nyoni’s I Am Not A Witch, Danny Boyle’s T2 Trainspotting, Yorgos Lanthimos’s The Killing of a Sacred Deer and Adam Smith’s Trespass Against Us.

Film4 has a strong slate for 2018, including both new and established filmmakers with distinctive stories that aim to resonate with UK and international audiences. Upcoming titles include Martin McDonagh’s Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri, Clio Barnard’s Dark River, Andrew Haigh’s Lean on Pete, Stephen Merchant’s Fighting With My Family and Lynne Ramsay’s You Were Never Really Here. Films still in production include Mike Leigh’s Peterloo, Steve McQueen’s Widows and Lenny Abrahamson’s forthcoming adaptation of Sarah Waters’ acclaimed wartime ghost story The Little Stranger.

“Film4 is known as a home for high quality commercial and critically successful titles and is a major developer of talent.”

Deadline
SUPPORTING
CREATIVE
BUSINESSES
As a publisher-broadcaster, we don’t make any of our programmes in-house, but commission from hundreds of independent production companies right across the UK – giving opportunities to British creative talent and supporting a thriving and world-renowned production sector.

Working with independent production companies

£496m investment in first run external commissions across our TV portfolio (+2%)

171 independent TV production partners across our commissions in TV, film and digital media out of 309 suppliers (+7%)

Investment in the Nations and Regions

£189m spent on production companies based outside of London (+£20m)

57% of hours of first run originated programmes came from suppliers outside of London (+2pts)

2018 ambitions

- We will continue to support production companies across the UK, with regionally produced programmes such as new comedy series Derry Girls, filmed and produced in Northern Ireland, as well as returning factual series, including 999: What’s Your Emergency? and Supervet.
- Our content will reflect the lives of people throughout the UK, with programmes including returning dramas No Offence and Ackley Bridge, long-running soap Hollyoaks, as well as ensuring a breadth of regional diversity in our popular Features and Daytime formats.
- We will continue to nurture talent throughout the UK: with indies via producer briefings and our Alpha Fund investment, and with young people via our C4 Pop Ups and higher education partnerships.

We’re proud of our influential and disproportionately impactful role in the UK’s creative economy. Our remit to be innovative, distinctive and experimental means we give creative people a unique place to bring bold, new ideas.

This adds up to an economic legacy that will last long into the future. We support 17,000 jobs throughout the UK, contributing £1.1 billion in Gross Value Added each year.

Supporting creative businesses and those who work across all parts of the industry is an intrinsic part of our business model and our purpose, helping Britain maintain its position as a global creative powerhouse.
For over 35 years, we have successfully balanced the twin goals of delivering a public service whilst being commercially self-sufficient. It’s a powerful business model that enables us to maintain our editorial and financial independence, and to continuously reinvest our revenues back into high quality British content and creative businesses.

In 2017, we worked with 309 companies across our portfolio, investing £510 million in originated content from British producers, an increase of 2% on the previous year.

The independent producers that we work with typically retain the secondary rights to the programmes that they create (beyond Channel 4’s first-run window). This ensures that our investment has a multiplier effect, whereby our production partners can go on to sell their content in secondary windows and internationally, generating additional revenue streams for them. Through this model, in which both the risks and rewards can be significant, Channel 4 helps to foster entrepreneurialism within the UK’s creative industries.

Indeed, Channel 4 accounts for 37% of all UK spending on indies by public service broadcasters.

Our spend in the Nations and Regions is growing: in 2017, the Nations and Regions accounted for a record 57% (55% in 2016) of hours, and we invested £189 million on programmes from the Nations and Regions, £20 million more than in 2016. For the fifth successive year, more than half of all first-run origination was from suppliers outside of London (57%, up two percentage points year-on-year).

Regional indies continue to deliver successful returning hits, including No Offence (Manchester’s Abbotsvision), Extreme Cakemakers (Cardiff’s Boom Cymru), Homes by the Sea (Leeds’ True North), Supershoppers (Glasgow’s Firecrest), and Hollyoaks (Liverpool’s Lime Pictures), which has now been on Channel 4 for more than 20 years (read our full case study, page 30).

Some of our most significant new commissions this year came from indies in the Nations and Regions, including Steph and Dom’s One Star to Five Star (Wales’ Blink Entertainment), Lego Masters (Suffolk’s Tuesday’s Child East), How to Stay Well (Glasgow’s Tern Television), and The World’s Most Expensive Cars (Northern Ireland’s Waddell Media).

Our investment in programming made in the Nations and Regions isn’t just about economic impact – it’s also integral to ensuring that we reflect stories, experiences and voices from all over the UK.

Many of our programmes are strongly rooted in the locations in which they are based, with the storylines and characters or contributors in the programmes reflecting their locations’ culture and diversity. For example, new drama Ackley Bridge tells the story of a diverse school in Yorkshire, grappling with the challenges of cultural integration in a segregated community.

Meanwhile, Confessions of a Junior Doctor, filmed in Northampton General Hospital, examined the struggles faced by young doctors in an NHS hospital.

Some of our most popular returning series reflect the diversity of the UK at their cores: for example, Location, Location, Location is filmed in many parts of the UK. Each episode of Gogglebox features families drawn from a range of locations across the UK, including Merseyside, Clacton-on-Sea, Wiltshire and Wales.

In January 2017, True North became the first successful exit for our Indie Growth Fund, delivering a profit on sale.

True North Productions
Leeds based indie True North was set up in 2001 by producers Andrew Sheldon and Jess Fowle in a bid to build a truly indigenous and sustainable TV production business outside of London. In 2014, it was one of the first companies Channel 4 invested in through its new £20 million Indie Growth Fund.
“They’re investing in us and we’re investing in them. The Nations and Regions team have been great champions of ours and have always had our back. There’s no doubt that their support has helped secure commissions.”

Jane Muirhead
MD of Glasgow-based Raise the Roof Productions

A dedicated Nations and Regions team

Our investment in content in the Nations and Regions is supported by best-in-class development funding, outreach, skills and training from our dedicated Nations and Regions team.

Based in Glasgow, the team is a strategic arm of the Channel 4 Commissioning division, delivering programmes of outreach work to support production companies from the Nations and Regions. This work is particularly aimed at small and emerging businesses, prioritising strategic input and partnership, in order to help them win commissions.

In 2017, our Nations and Regions team worked with 84 indies on a monthly basis, supporting them in a number of ways, including working with their development team, giving advice, helping to shape ideas and introducing them to Channel 4 commissioners. In addition, the Nations and Regions team spent £450,000 through our Alpha Fund, to provide development funding to seven indies in the English regions, five companies in Northern Ireland, three companies in Wales and three in Scotland.

The number of Nations and Regions commissioner briefings increased from 16 events in 2016 to 21 events this year. These were attended by 311 individuals from 139 companies from the Nations and Regions. The briefings were tailored to improve existing supplier growth as well as to connect with new indies.

The Nations and Regions team developed a number of partnerships with other organisations in 2017, including with RTS Yorkshire, RTS Midlands, Glasgow College, University of South Wales and Creative Access. These partnerships, which gave students access to Channel 4 Briefing Days and work experience at those events, provided another way for the team to further embed their work into the wider creative community.

In total, the Nations and Regions team sponsored 14 festivals, award ceremonies and talent schemes.

Meet Deborah Dunnett, Nations and Regions Manager

“Diversity of supply is at the heart of Channel 4’s remit. We strive to work with new production talent and compelling, diverse voices from across the UK.

“My team is there to support that talent and to help their companies succeed. We maximise the indies’ commissioning potential by embedding ourselves within the commissioning teams, helping to shape ideas and providing regular commissioner engagement and intelligence – all with a dedicated development fund to back our work up.

“If we’re working with an indie that is new to Channel 4, we help make introductions and partner them with the appropriate commissioner, coaching them on how we work as a business and helping them to get in a position to win their first commission with Channel 4. If we’re working with an existing indie partner, we look at expansion – introducing them to new commissioners or partnering them with new genres, giving them business advice and helping them with talent.

“It’s thrilling to be with our indies as they grow and to see their region’s economy grow alongside them. In fact, a large part of our current focus is to increase our partnerships with each wider creative community, to help strengthen each hub and its talent.”

£450,000
spent through our Alpha Fund
Lime Pictures

Lime Pictures – originally founded as Mersey Television – has produced Hollyoaks for 21 years and previously made Channel 4’s first ‘soap’, Brookside, until 2003.

Filmed on a dedicated set on Lime Pictures’ campus in Childwall, Liverpool, Hollyoaks is Channel 4’s biggest Nations and Regions-commissioned programme. Now running at five episodes a week, Hollyoaks is also one of our most popular and enduring shows. As well as providing entertaining storylines that appeal to hard-to-reach young viewers, it delivers impactful, important public service messages to this core audience on challenging subjects including rape, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, eating disorders, mental health problems, HIV, body dysmorphia and LGBT issues.

The scale of Channel 4’s investment in Hollyoaks provides Lime Pictures with a stable platform from which to build and invest in talent over a sustained period of time. Having developed a stable of writers and directing talent, Lime Pictures has become one of the most successful British production companies, producing programmes for other broadcasters including The Only Way Is Essex for ITV2, Geordie Shore for MTV and Disney’s Evermoor.

Lime Pictures’ success brings further economic benefits to its local economy: it is an important local employer, with half of its entire Childwall-based staff living within a 20-minute drive of the campus. And it has helped to ensure a rich and varied talent pool in the Liverpool area, many of whom will go on to build successful careers in the creative economy.

Lime Pictures works actively with Channel 4 on a number of talent development initiatives, such as the Northern Writers’ Award, which offered winner Sharma Walfall a placement on Hollyoaks. Lime also supports Channel 4’s diversity storylining initiative, offering two 12-week placements on the Hollyoaks team for people from a BAME background or with a disability.

“Channel 4’s commitment to Hollyoaks has enabled Lime Pictures to sustain over 300 permanent roles, meaningfully invest in the local infrastructure and talent, providing a stable foundation for the creation and retention of a strong craft base.”

Claire Poyser
Joint Managing Director, Lime Pictures
Supporting exports

Our most significant means of supporting the health and growth of the UK’s globally successful indie sector is through the ongoing investment in content by our commissioning teams. Channel 4 commissions enable production companies to build their profile and their businesses, allowing them to win business from other clients, both in the UK and internationally.

As the indies that we work with own the intellectual property behind their programmes, they are able to sell on their programmes and formats around the world. Indies have done this with great success over the years – in 2015-2016, the UK was the second-largest exporter of television formats in the world, with total revenues from TV exports worth more than £1.3 billion per year.

Channel 4 was set up to take risks, innovate and invest in talent. Our model – as a publisher-broadcaster that commissions all of our programmes from outside suppliers, and reinvests our profits into programmes – enables us to take risks on creative ideas and people that other organisations with different models might not.

Those risks pay off in the long term to the benefit of UK plc, as is evident from Channel 4’s strong track record of developing the early careers of internationally successful British talent. This includes world-renowned film directors Danny Boyle, Steve McQueen and Martin McDonagh, as well as many TV presenters, comedians and actors who started on Channel 4 before moving to more mainstream channels. And it is evident from the many television formats that were initially developed for Channel 4 and which production companies have then gone on to sell around the world, such as Gogglebox, which has been exported to over 35 territories from the USA to Japan.

Meanwhile, our Commercial Growth Fund, which we launched in 2015 following our success with the Indie Growth Fund, continues to invest in start-ups, offering ‘media for equity’ to high-growth-potential companies.

This represents an alternative route for companies to access valuable Channel 4 airtime in exchange for shares. The Commercial Growth Fund focuses on consumer growth-phase companies, with a bias towards highly disruptive companies that are aligned to Channel 4’s audience profile. As TV continues to be the biggest medium for mass reach, reaching 97% of the UK population each month, the Commercial Growth Fund proposition remains attractive for start-ups looking to gain more visibility.

Since it launched in 2015, the Commercial Growth Fund has completed ten equity investments. Most notably, one of its earlier investments, Eve Sleep, successfully listed on the AIM Exchange in May 2017.

In 2017, Commercial Growth Fund investments included: HundredRooms, a meta search engine for booking holiday homes; Get Agent, an online comparison service for estate agents; and Tootle, an online marketplace for pre-owned car sales.
REMIT PERFORMANCE

YOUNG PEOPLE
Maintaining and growing our connection with young people is now, more than ever, a key focus for Channel 4. Across all our output, our alternative and distinctive approach to subjects appeals strongly to young audiences, and our programmes tend to focus on themes that are particularly relevant to young people. Factual programmes especially often contain educational content that helps young people develop life skills, bridging the knowledge gap between what is taught in the classroom and at home, and supporting young people, especially 14-19-year-olds, as they transition from childhood to adulthood.

Engaging young people

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>Portfolio viewing share among 16-34-year-olds (+1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>Viewing share for E4 among 16-34-year-olds (+5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Channel 4 is the third most popular UK TV channel among 16-34-year-olds (=)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>Channel 4 has a share of 7.5% of 16-34-year-olds (+1%)</td>
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This approach results in disproportionately strong viewing figures relative to other public service broadcasters, particularly in our factual genres. In 2017, Channel 4 programmes accounted for seven of the top ten factual entertainment shows among young audiences, with *The Great British Bake Off* attracting higher viewing figures and share amongst 16-34-year-olds than any other series.

2018 ambitions

- We will grow our emphasis on young-skewing popular Factual, Education and Entertainment content with new programmes including *Class of Mum and Dad* plus extended returning series such as *Ackley Bridge* and *Lego Masters*. We will also launch new titles that appeal to 10-14-year-olds, including *Postcode Playdates*. Meanwhile, new series *Derry Girls* will showcase an array of new on-screen talent from Northern Ireland.
- We will further build on our successful online strategy to engage young people in News and Current Affairs and explore issues that impact their lives, while our Education content will continue to focus on life skills for teens.

Our factual genres are one of the most effective ways to engage with young people. Of our ten top-performing programmes among 16-34-year-olds, eight were original commissions and seven came from factual genres.
Engaging young audiences is a core part of our remit. We work hard to commission programmes that appeal to 16-34-year-olds, an increasingly hard-to-reach audience as young viewers migrate towards on-demand content and platforms. In 2017, our programmes tackled serious subjects such as cyber bullying (*Hollyoaks, Ackley Bridge*), sexuality (*50 Shades of Gay, Is Love Racist?, The Sex Testers*), and fake news (*The Fake News Show*).

Viewing amongst 16-34-year-olds was particularly strong in Factual genres this year. In Factual Entertainment, seven of the UK’s top ten programmes amongst 16-34-year-olds were shown on Channel 4. New launches such as *The Great British Bake Off*, *Celebrity Hunted* and *First Dates Hotel* complemented existing titles such as *The Island*, *Gogglebox*, *The Undateables* and *Travel Man*.

Overall, the main channel’s share of 16-34-year-olds grew by one percentage point in 2017, in a highly competitive market. Indeed, for the first time, ITV2 overtook E4 in terms of 16-34-year-old viewing share in 2017, largely due to ITV2’s success with *Love Island*. Our dedicated youth-focused digital channel, E4, saw a 5% rise in viewing amongst 16-34-year-olds, thanks to the continued success of shows such as *Made in Chelsea*, *Tattoo Fixers* and *Celebs Go Dating*.

Our flagship soap *Hollyoaks* has run on Channel 4 for more than 20 years and continues to be the youngest-skewing soap on British television. 65% of its audience on E4 were under the age of 35, whilst across Channel 4 and E4 it reached 50% of 16-34-year-olds, or 7.2 million young viewers. With storylines in *Hollyoaks* featuring a range of important contemporary themes in 2017 – including mental health, sexuality and relationships – the soap continues to provide a platform to tackle important social issues.
Older children strategy – focusing on prime time

Our strategy for older children is to provide content that reflects their lives and interests while also having popular mainstream appeal amongst broader age groups. This was exemplified by Child Genius, an annual competition to find the UK’s child prodigies.

In 2017, we sought to develop successful returnable formats for this audience. Lego Masters was a new commission that put children’s Lego design and construction skills to the test. It aired at 8pm on Thursdays in August and September, forming part of a deliberate strategy to schedule programmes that appeal to 10-14-year-olds in the pre-watershed 8pm time slot. This strategy was extremely successful, with a 38% increase in viewing share amongst 10-14-year-olds in this time slot, a bigger increase than for any other age group.

Lego Masters will return as an extended series in 2018, along with Postcode Playdates, in which families with children from the same neighbourhood but across social divides will open their doors to their neighbours’ offspring for a playdate for the very first time.

As well as programmes made specifically for 10-14-year-olds, Channel 4 engages this age group with a wide range of programming, including programmes for young audiences more generally (such as Ackley Bridge) and programmes with broad family appeal, such as The Secret Life of 4 and 5 Year Olds and The Great British Bake Off.

Channel 4’s appeal to older children was evidenced by Ofcom research in 2017 which found that 48% of 10-14-year-olds “like or love” the Channel 4 family, rising to 63% among regular Channel 4 viewers.

Lego Masters

New format Lego Masters attempted to find Britain and Ireland’s most talented amateur Lego builders. Hosted by Melvin Odoom, eight pairs of children competed against one another by designing and building intricate Lego masterpieces.

The programme was developed with the aim both to appeal to the tastes of older children and also to meet our renewed strategy to develop strong returnable formats that are educational and entertaining. It performed strongly with a series average audience of two million viewers and a 9.7% viewing share.

The series became Channel 4’s biggest prime time series for children by viewers since 2014: it gained a 24.2% viewing share for 10-15 year olds (272% higher than the slot average) and a 22.7% share of 4-9 year olds (254% above the slot average). The programme will return in 2018.

Our strategy has been to develop strong returnable formats that are not just educational – but also watchable.
Fake News Week

It’s never been easier to spread fake news stories. In the last year, new websites have sprung up posting unverified and untrue information, which has been shared widely on social media. Channel 4 dedicated a week-long season of programming in February 2017 to look at the ‘post-truth’ world.

Working with its award-winning Fact Check team, Channel 4 News explored where fake news comes from and the implications of the spread of fake news in a special programme. It also hosted an interactive Q&A on the subject using Facebook Live. The season also included two documentaries that looked at different aspects of the manipulation of truth (Confessions of A Paparazzi and Britain’s Greatest Hoaxer) as well as entertainment programmes, such as the one-off comedy panel show The Fake News Show, which dissected the outlandish headlines and wild lies that have pushed ‘post-truth’ to the front pages.

The Fake News season reached a total of 7.5 million viewers across the week, 1.6 million of whom were young people. This equates to 11.3% of 16-34-year-olds across the UK.

Channel 4 News’ special programme performed especially strongly with young people, with a 40% boost in viewing share amongst 16-34-year-olds relative to its slot average, and an even higher 51% increase vs slot average for 16-24-year-olds.

57% of 18-24 year olds state they are worried about the effects of fake news.

1.6m viewers were young people.

11.3% of 16-34 year olds across the UK.

Viewers across the week: 7.5m

“Judging by the way things are going, it might be a good idea to make this programme a permanent fixture.”

Radio Times (The Fake News Show)
Ackley Bridge

Ackley Bridge, a new drama launched in June 2017 in an 8pm prime time slot, was developed as part of Channel 4’s commitment to new talent and regional production. It formed the centrepiece of our educational content provision for 14-19 year olds.

Targeted at young people, the programme is set in a fictional Yorkshire mill town, home to a largely divided white and Asian population. Based on real schools in Lancashire and Yorkshire that merged in order to unite culturally divided communities, the six part drama follows storylines at the fictional brand new academy Ackley Bridge College. The series had a strong educational element, focusing on subjects that affect young people, such as bullying, poverty, sexuality, social integration and racism.

Filmed in Halifax, West Yorkshire, production company The Forge worked with Calderdale, Kirklees, Bradford and Leeds city councils during the development of the series.

Many of the supporting actors in the series were ‘street cast’ alongside professionals. These local residents – who were talent scouted in local boxing clubs, schools and community groups – provided the show with extra authenticity and grit. The production company also gave work experience placements to local students throughout the preparation and production of the show.

Ackley Bridge was one of Channel 4’s most successful dramas of 2017, reaching 5.5 million viewers over the series. The show performed very strongly with younger audiences, securing an 18.5% share of 16-34 year olds. It connected more strongly still with teen audiences, achieving a 21.8% share amongst 14-19 year olds, a 446% increase on the Wednesday 8pm slot average for this age group. Amongst older children aged 10-14, its share was 441% above the slot average.

Not only was the first series of Ackley Bridge popular, it was also impactful. A notable 72% of 10-15 year olds said that they had spoken about the show with friends, while 65% said they had spoken to their parents about issues tackled in the programme – such as diversity and integration, bullying, personal development and identity. A further 15% were motivated to talk to a teacher about aspects of Ackley Bridge.

Ackley Bridge returns for an extended second series in early 2018.

“All the threads of a great series come together for a brilliant finale, bring it back soon Channel 4!”

The Sun

Q&A interview:

17-year-old Nazmeen Kauser, who played Razia in Ackley Bridge

Q Why was Ackley Bridge so successful with young people?
A The topics and storylines of Ackley Bridge are like modern life; when you watch it, you see today’s society – it shows how we speak and how we deal with things. It’s just bang on about how we live today, as kids and teenagers. It shows all our tricks!

It’s a drama series, but it’s just like reality – it shows what real life is like for us. Most of the young people who worked on the show came from the same background as the characters they played.

Q How did you end up with a role on Ackley Bridge?
A I was cast on the street! I was walking home after being excluded from school for a day (for refusing to take my jacket off in winter!), when I bumped into Penny Woolcock, Ackley Bridge’s director, and she asked if I wanted to audition for a TV show.

Obviously, in real life, a normal, young person from West Yorkshire like myself would never expect to get a main part in a TV series – but I did, and it’s been fantastic. It was a bit mad, but the Ackley Bridge set became like a second home to me.
Identifying and nurturing talent is a vital part of Channel 4’s role: our remit to experiment and take risks means that a core part of our business strategy is to support emerging and established talent alike across TV, film and digital media. This ensures we can produce the best quality content and bring through the brightest and best of the next generation, both in front of the camera and in the production teams behind the scenes. Supporting new talent in particular helps keep our output distinctive and strengthens our appeal to younger audiences.

We are committed to ensuring that people from different backgrounds and walks of life can successfully pursue careers in the media industry, both on and off screen, helping to foster the UK’s vibrant and innovative television and film sectors.

We invest significantly in talent and skills development initiatives within Channel 4, through our production partners, and by supporting cultural and educational institutions, to help people ‘get in’ and ‘get on’.

Our strategy for nurturing talent is targeted at people at every stage on the career ladder, including the earliest stages. We are committed to finding new on and off screen talent, from the grassroots, providing practical hands-on experience through our paid apprenticeships and production training schemes, through to mentoring and outreach programmes.

We also take pride in working with and helping develop talent as they progress through their careers, developing long lasting relationships which ensure that Channel 4 and the talent we work with share in mutual success.

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2018 ambitions

- We will continue to cultivate new talent and bring new voices to British screens, for example with our new series Lee & Dean, written by new comedy talents Mark O’Sullivan and Miles Chapman, and new projects with Big Narstie and Jamali Maddix.

- Within Channel 4, we will continue to take action on tackling the gender gap, improving BAME representation at all levels and breaking down social mobility barriers. We will also super-charge our 4Talent initiatives to engage young, diverse people in a career in media, taking our C4 Pop Ups to towns across the UK. More of our apprenticeships will be based in the Nations and Regions.

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We also take pride in working with and helping develop talent as they progress through their careers, developing long lasting relationships which ensure that Channel 4 and the talent we work with share in mutual success.
Channel 4’s output in 2017 demonstrates the depth of our commitment to talent – forging long-term relationships, helping established talent move in new directions and discovering and championing new UK talent.

One of the TV drama highlights this year was The State, from renowned director Peter Kosminsky. Channel 4 has worked with Peter for many years, giving him the time, space and editorial support to make a number of complex and challenging films about modern Britain, including The Government Inspector (2005), Blitz (2007) and The Promise (2011).

There is always a risk of creative talent being pigeon-holed, and the diversity of our output allows us to help talented individuals expand their horizons across different genres or in different media. Comedian Richard Ayoade found new audiences in 2017 when he fronted the revival of The Crystal Maze. Richard’s earliest collaborations with Channel 4 were on scripted comedy productions, including The Mighty Boosh, Nathan Barley and The IT Crowd. Film4 Productions supported his feature film directorial debut with the comedy-drama Submarine (2011). And in television, Channel 4 worked with Richard to apply his comedic talents in new genres with the launch of factual entertainment show Travel Man in 2015, the latest series of which also aired this year.

In 2017, Film4 teamed up again with leading film director Danny Boyle on T2 Trainspotting, the long-awaited sequel to his 1996 classic Trainspotting. Danny made his first two feature films with Film4 Productions (the ground-breaking Shallow Grave (1994) and Trainspotting (1996)), and has returned to make films with us a number of times since, including the Oscar-winning Slumdog Millionaire (2008).

Meanwhile, in Drama, we continued to develop new talent in 2017, giving breakthrough roles to Jack Rowan (Born to Kill) and Jessica Barden (The End of the F***ing World).

Comedy Blaps

Comedy Blaps is Channel 4’s vehicle for piloting comedy online. Blaps are entry level, grassroots series of four minute pieces comprising brand new comedy ideas that allow talent to find their creative feet. Open to anyone, Comedy Blaps has proved very successful at identifying and breaking exciting comedy talent early in their careers and introducing them to large audiences on All 4.

In the seven years since the annual Comedy Blaps scheme was launched, seven series have been picked up for development by Channel 4 and E4 – a phenomenal success rate.

In 2017, two of our comedy programmes stemmed from Comedy Blaps: Michaela Cole’s Chewing Gum – the first comedy series written by a BAME performer on Channel 4, which has won multiple awards – and Roisin Conaty’s Game Face, which was initially created as a Comedy Blap four years ago.
Our activity around talent is underpinned by a clear business rationale as well as by wider advocacy within – and beyond – our sector. Why is this important to us? It’s an important part of our remit, but it’s also absolutely essential for ensuring our continued creative and commercial success.

At the heart of our talent strategy is social mobility, which we have divided into three strands: early outreach, ‘getting in’ and ‘getting on’. For these strands to work, it is essential both to raise awareness of opportunities among young people and then to ensure that they are able to use those opportunities to further their careers.

Over the past few years, we have launched a number of industry-leading schemes tailored to early outreach.

The Channel 4 Pop Ups are a national outreach programme of skills workshops and challenges taking place across the UK, which deliberately target young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. In 2017, 618 young people attended our Pop Ups in Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Glasgow, London and Manchester. We succeeded in attracting a more diverse group of young people than in 2016, with 31% of attendees from a BAME background, 16% identifying as LGBT and 8% as disabled.

Our Work Experience Scheme provides training and hands-on experience of working in a team at Channel 4. This attracted 2,216 applications in 2017 and we offered 56 work placements across the year. Of these, half of the placements were offered to young people from the Nations and Regions, who we supported financially during their placement.

We also continued our partnership with the Royal Television Society, offering five grants worth £1,000 each per year through the RTS Technology Bursary Scheme, as well as mentoring. These bursaries aim to encourage talented engineering and computer science graduates from low-income backgrounds to consider a career in TV through placements and support.

The cornerstone of our ‘getting in’ strategy is our Apprenticeship Scheme. Apprentices spend 12 months attached to one of our departments in London, Manchester or Glasgow, working on a range of in-depth projects that count towards their Level 3 or 4 qualification. In 2017, we welcomed 17 young apprentices for year-long placements, out of a pool of 2,379 applicants.

Turning to the ‘getting on’ strand, we funded 16 young people through our Production Training Scheme, a 12-month salaried training programme where we place trainees at independent production companies. Of these 16 places, 11 were with companies based in the Nations and Regions, in Birmingham, Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Newry. Of our trainees graduating in 2017, 77% are now working full time in the industry, including at production companies such as The Garden, North One, BBC Three and Firecracker.

Testimonial:
Ella Powell, Pop Up attendee and Work Experience Trainee at North One Television

“After attending the Production Pop Up in Birmingham, I reached out to North One for work experience and was grateful to be given a week with the team. I was put in the Channel 4 Travel Man team and got to see how the pre-production worked as well as taking part in administrative tasks. I wouldn’t have been able to get this opportunity without attending the Pop Up.”

“I wouldn’t have been able to get this opportunity without attending the Pop Up.”
Rungano Nyoni’s
I Am Not A Witch

Born in Zambia and raised in Wales, Rungano Nyoni – the writer and director of I Am Not A Witch – is a perfect example of how we identify and cultivate talent from across the UK.

Our Film4 team first came across Rungano when she was a screenwriter on a separate film project and we quickly started exploring the possibility of working on her directorial feature debut. She submitted her script for I Am Not A Witch in May 2016 and, alongside BFI and Film Cymru Wales, we helped to develop and co-finance the film, which tells the story of nine year old Shula, exiled to a travelling witch camp. She is told that if she tries to escape, she will be transformed into a goat. As she navigates through her new life, she must decide whether to accept her fate or risk the consequences of seeking freedom.

The film has been a critical success following its world premiere at Cannes in May 2017, winning multiple awards at the British Independent Film Awards, Africa International Film Festival, Stockholm Film Festival, Mumbai Film Festival and Adelaide Film Festival among others.

And in 2018, Rungano won the prestigious BAFTA Award for Outstanding Debut – which undoubtedly marks the start of a long, prosperous career.

“Rungano Nyoni’s debut feature is comic, poignant and captivatingly beautiful.”

Mark Kermode
The Observer

Professional development

The quality of our programming is dependent on the people that we work with, both in front of the camera (e.g. actors and presenters) and behind the scenes (e.g. directors, producers and writers). Everyone plays their part in turning brilliant ideas into well-made original content.

Our commissioning teams work hand-in-hand with independent production companies to find and cultivate new talent from all walks of life. We run a number of schemes across different genres that provide a platform to showcase new creative, artistic writing and directing talent. Examples include First Cuts and Cutting Edge (Documentaries); Comedy Blaps (Comedy); Random Acts (Arts); and 4Stories (Drama).

On the production side, our Commissioning Mentor Network focuses on identifying diverse rising stars and helping to elevate them to more senior posts in commissioning and production, both at Channel 4 and within independent production companies. This has created a reservoir of diverse talent: there are now 140 rising stars in the Network, of which 89% come from a range of diverse backgrounds.

The Network is supplemented by the Northern Writers’ Award, a scheme launched in 2014 by Northumbria University in partnership with Channel 4, to identify raw and diverse talent from the north of England. Channel 4’s Alpha Fund also spent £450,000 in 2017 on supporting start-ups, BAME-led and regionally based companies as well as projects with diverse talent attached. Eighteen companies received Alpha Funding, of which five were based in Northern Ireland, three in Wales, three in Scotland and seven in the English regions.

On the film side, Film4 has also continued to support new talent, nurturing diverse voices across its film slate. Debut films supported by Film4 in 2017 include Rungano Nyoni’s I Am Not A Witch, which won three British Independent Film Awards (case study, left). Through these bespoke talent initiatives, we continue to develop a strong pipeline of talent, supporting Channel 4’s success as well as that of the wider UK creative sector.
Q&A interview: Jack Rowan

What has been the effect on your career of starring in Born to Kill?

Born to Kill changed my life – it's been my golden ticket and it's now my calling card. Since it aired, I've appeared on the BBC's Peaky Blinders and have also signed with an agent in the US.

As well as being a success on TV, Born to Kill was a success within the industry because it was so different to everything else. It was the first time that I'd ever gotten a lead role, and this has helped to make casting directors and producers aware of me.

For me, as a young actor, Born to Kill has been the seed from which the tree keeps on growing.

How did you prepare for the role?

In addition to being the biggest role I've ever had, it was also the most demanding. It wasn't easy – I had to do a lot of preparation, as I knew this was an amazing opportunity and I didn't want to waste it. I read a lot of material to understand more about teenage psychopathy – what happens in the brain, what are psychopathic tendencies? I also watched many documentaries to see how real people with psychopathy act. So I took bits from everywhere – the softness, the anger, the intelligence – to mould my character.

Why do you think the programme was so successful?

Born to Kill worked so well because Channel 4 was not afraid to take risks – it was very raw and rough and told a story that had never been seen on British TV. Plus, highlighting the issue of teenage psychopathy – what happens in the brain, what are psychopathic tendencies? I also watched many documentaries to see how real people with psychopathy act. So I took bits from everywhere – the softness, the anger, the intelligence – to mould my character.

What advice would you give to young talent that also wants to break through?

I would just say, don't be lazy! If you get an audition, do your best, even if you don't think the part is necessarily right for you, as you never know who will be in the room. Also have confidence in your future – put in the work and you will get rewarded. If you want something that badly, you'll get it!

Educating new talent

Our training scheme for budding investigative journalists continued in 2017. We have now trained 40 journalists since we launched the junior scheme six years ago, from a wide range of backgrounds. Of these, 14 journalists trained in the Nations and Regions and 12 were from diverse sections of the community.

We have also trained 16 more advanced journalists on the senior scheme, which helps people to make the jump to produce and direct their own current affairs documentaries. We also continued to sponsor the RTS Technology Bursary scheme, a development programme for highly talented technologists from low-income families.

2017 saw the first graduates of the MA degree in Investigative Journalism that we set up in partnership with De Montfort University in Leicester. Many of the degree's first cohort of seven students, who joined the course in October 2016, have already secured journalism jobs, including one young man who has joined Hardcash Productions, working as a researcher for Channel 4's Dispatches programme, and another who now works at the BBC.

Demand for places on the programme is strong, with the second intake of MA students expanding to a group of 13 students, six of whom are from diverse backgrounds.
In a year of social and political upheavals, Channel 4 continued to play a crucial role in provoking debate, inspiring change and telling stories from contemporary Britain and a rapidly changing world.

**Inspiring change**

- **65%** of viewers said that Channel 4’s factual programmes inspired change in their lives
- **33%** of viewers said that Channel 4 is the TV channel they associate the most with challenging prejudice

**Alternative views**

- **37%** of viewers said Channel 4 is the home for alternative voices
- **34%** of viewers said that Channel 4 is the best channel to show the viewpoints of minority groups in society

**2018 ambitions**

- As Britain navigates through political and economic uncertainty, we will continue to produce programmes that challenge viewers and stimulate debate, such as Jack Thorne’s Kiri, a four-part drama set in Bristol about the abduction of a child, starring Sarah Lancashire.
- Through our flagship News and Current Affairs programmes, such as Channel 4 News, Dispatches and Unreported World, we will hold those in power to account, investigating key issues affecting people at home and further afield.
- We will also continue our support of parasport in 2018, with 100 hours of coverage of the PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games in South Korea, plus ongoing parasport coverage across the year.

In News and Current Affairs, we pushed boundaries and took risks, continuing to deliver long-form programmes in peak-time whilst also forging new modes of connection with young people through digital platforms.

On the global stage, we tracked the highs and lows of the first tempestuous year of Donald Trump’s presidency, continued to shine a light on the war in Syria, and exposed the plight of the Rohingya people in Myanmar.

Closer to home, across a mix of genres – including Drama, Documentaries and Factual – we provoked debate and covering thought-provoking issues that affect people’s day-to-day lives, our content is a powerful catalyst for social change.
Channel 4’s distinctive approach to News and Current Affairs – in terms of the form and subject matter of our programmes – allows us to provide alternative views and stimulate debate, particularly among younger viewers.

Channel 4 News is the only hour-long news programme in peak-time on the main PSB channels; the extended running time enables stories to be covered in more depth and from more angles. Channel 4 News was watched by an average of 8.2 million viewers each month in 2017. It has particular appeal to young adults, with 16-34-year-olds making up 13% of viewers this year. The programme also performed well amongst BAME groups, who accounted for 15% of viewers. Its viewing share rose by 3% in 2017, a fourth consecutive year of growth.

Channel 4 News was the news programme that viewers most associated with being independent from Government and from the influence of big businesses in 2017, more than the news on the BBC, ITV or Sky.

“A window on the world

The strength of our News and Current Affairs helped us to win our third International Emmy for News in five years. In 2017, this was for our coverage of the Syrian civil war, which featured exclusive reports from inside Syria that showed the turmoil and destruction of war and brought it to the attention of the wider British public.

One of our most impactful films was Syria’s Disappeared, a documentary from our Dispatches series, which was transmitted in March. The film offered extraordinary access to survivors of detention, families of detainees, regime defectors and international war crimes investigators.

It told the hidden story of the tens of thousands of men, women and children who have been ‘disappeared’ in Syria by the Assad regime into a network of clandestine detention centres. Among those giving testimony were former captives Manzen Alhummada, a human rights activist who was brutally tortured, and Mansour al-Omari, who courageously smuggled out details of other prisoners written on scraps of cloth in rust and blood.

The Inside Aleppo films, produced by Channel 4 News’ Waad al-Kateab, also had a major impact. Her coverage prompted discussion around the world, with the Deputy Secretary General of the UN, Amina Mohammed, stating they were “heart-breaking.”

The reach of our award-winning investigative films was extended by our multi-platform strategy. Films were not only aired on Channel 4, they were also watchable online and were shared widely on social media, helping them to reach a younger audience. The Inside Aleppo films received close to half a billion views online and were shared millions of times on social media, which made them the most watched reports on Aleppo by a single filmmaker ever.

“Brilliant and sickening... important, superbly constructed and focused documentary... required viewing for MPs.”

The Times
Across 28 films, our flagship Dispatches strand investigated the things that matter to communities that are often neglected by the state and ignored by the media. The programme aired almost entirely in a peak-time 8pm slot, bringing large audiences to its domestic investigations on topics such as the gig economy, the housing crisis and welfare reforms.

Across the year, Dispatches averaged 1.1 million viewers per episode, with the most successful programme, Secrets of Coca-Cola – about Coca-Cola’s opposition to the sugar tax and its close ties to influential scientists – pulling in 1.7 million viewers.

Dispatches: Under Lock and Key

Under Lock and Key, which aired in March 2017, illustrates how our Dispatches films can have powerful real life impacts.

The film focused on life inside one of Britain’s largest psychiatric hospitals, St Andrew’s in Northampton, showing how people with learning disabilities and autism are still being held in institutions that do not meet their needs, make them better or – in some cases – even keep them safe.

Without being granted personal access to the hospital, filmmaker Alison Millar relied on three families to tell their stories from outside the hospital’s walls. The film painted a damning picture of medical neglect, inadequate treatment and the exclusion of families from decision making.

Following its transmission, the Government was pressed in Parliament about the investigation, with Minister for Care David Mowat acknowledging that the current care situation was “not good enough.” Chief Nursing Officer Jane Cummings convened the programme’s key contributors to discuss the issues raised in the film. The programme is now being used as a teaching resource across the care industry to help change the way that vulnerable adults are treated.
“Intriguing – and potentially pivotal. One lethal, unexpected question, or one fluffed answer, can undo the best-laid plans.”

The Observer

(May vs Corbyn Live: The Battle for Number 10)

Engaging young people in the election

Compared to the relatively traditional coverage on other channels, Channel 4 seeks new ways to bring elections to life, particularly for younger audiences. Our programming in the run up to the 2017 General Election combined tough talking current affairs with comedy and entertainment to engage viewers and stimulate debate on the big issues.

The centrepiece of our pre-election coverage was May vs Corbyn Live: The Battle for Number 10, in which Jeremy Paxman interviewed the chief contenders for Prime Minister. The 90-minute live programme, which was broadcast simultaneously on Channel 4 and Sky News, allowed viewers to hear directly from the two party leaders, who answered questions from a live studio audience.

The programme succeeded in informing and engaging viewers, particular younger ones amongst whom the propensity to vote proved especially important in this election. It reached a total of 5.3 million viewers over its 90 minutes on Channel 4. Viewing share was a substantial 40% above slot average for 16-34 year olds.

Research conducted after the programme aired found that the majority of 18-24 year old viewers felt more engaged with the General Election after watching the programme. 69% of them said that they felt more informed about the Labour and Conservative policies. And 20% of 18-24 year olds stated that they were more likely to go out and vote having watched the programme.

On the night of the election, our Alternative Election Night programme was hosted by Jeremy Paxman, David Mitchell and Richard Osman, with additional guests in the studio and across the country plus the Channel 4 News team on the ground in key electoral battlegrounds. This all-night feast of reaction, comment and analysis offered a lively and irreverent alternative to the more staid coverage elsewhere. It reached 3.8 million people, with a viewing share of 8.1% amongst 16-34 year olds.
Challenging perceptions

Beyond News and Current Affairs, our Drama commissions also helped to stimulate debate among the British public in 2017.

The State followed the experiences of four British men and women who joined Isis in Syria. It reached 5.5 million viewers and was largely credited as being a thought-provoking, gripping and “frighteningly realistic” piece of drama by critics and viewers. Although a challenging watch, 69% of viewers polled by research agency Other Lines – and 76% of Muslim viewers – agreed that the programme had value for society as a whole, as programmes like these serve to open up discussions surrounding the radicalisation of young British Muslims in society today.

Many of our documentaries also raised thought-provoking or challenging issues. Filmed at the height of the junior doctors’ crisis at the NHS, during which one in every ten junior doctors quit over a system they felt was being pushed to breaking point, Confessions of a Junior Doctor raised important questions over the future of the NHS.

The four-episode series, transmitted in April, reached 5.9 million people (9.9% of the TV-viewing population). Nine out of ten viewers said that the programme succeeded in raising awareness of the increasing pressures that young doctors face, while 55% said that their opinion of NHS staff had improved as a result of the programme.

In March, we challenged perceptions of Muslim people in a three-part documentary series Extremely British Muslims.

Filmed over a year, the series captured the day-to-day lives of Birmingham Central Mosque’s 6,000 worshippers. It focused on three themes: finding a partner, the identity crisis facing young Muslim men, and the challenges faced by some British Muslims as they try to reconcile the rules of their faith with life in Britain.

With eight out of ten Muslim people feeling unfairly represented by mainstream PSBs, this programme helped to dispel myths and stereotypes. The series drew a large audience, reaching close to four million people. 85% of Muslim viewers agreed that programmes such as this one helped to overcome prejudice and break taboos.

Food for thought

Our lifestyle programming can also act as a catalyst for change in people’s lives. In 2017, a range of informative series set out to reflect how we live now and how we can live life better, inspiring positive change among our viewers.

Healthy living was a key theme across the year. New series How to Get Fit Fast aimed to help viewers find the most effective exercise regime, reaching 3.4 million across the series. 36% of those surveyed stated that the programme made them think about changing something in their own life.

The promotion of positive lifestyles also featured in popular returning series Food Unwrapped, How To Lose Weight Well and Superfoods: The Real Story. These health-focused lifestyle programmes together reached a remarkable 28 million people across 2017 (47% of the UK TV-viewing population).
DIVERSITY
For Channel 4, more than any other broadcaster, diversity is at the heart of everything we do, on and off screen. In 2017, we further consolidated our reputation as a diversity leader, not only in broadcasting but in industry generally.

Diversity on and off screen

129 hrs
of first-run origination covering diversity issues on the main channel (-48%*)

69 hrs
of first-run programmes covering international topics (-10%)

10%
portfolio viewing share among BAME audiences (-2%)

32%
of output on the Film4 channel came from outside the US – and 17% were British films (=)

Diversity has always been important to us and we know that we will need to work constantly in order to become the diverse and inclusive organisation that we aspire to be – it is a journey that never ceases. It is enshrined in our statutory remit, which asks us “to appeal to the tastes and interests of a culturally-diverse society”. Many of the most iconic Channel 4 moments over the years have had diversity at their heart: from Brookside’s pre-watershed lesbian kiss to our gold-standard Paralympic sport coverage.

Through our work and our partnerships with others, we aim to fully reflect the diversity of Britain today in our output, and in the people who make these programmes.

We want our employees to feel that their individual talents are appreciated, that they can be themselves and be different. And we want our independent production partners to feel that Channel 4 enables them to tell the widest range of stories from different parts of society.

2018 ambitions

- We will continue to showcase diversity in all of its forms across all of our genres, including Factual Entertainment with Genderquake, which will explore gender fluidity; Comedy with The Bisexual, written by Desiree Akhavan, which explores ambiguity in sexuality; and Specialist Factual with Grayson Perry: Rites of Passage, which explores the landmark events that mark a person’s life.

- Three years on from the launch of our 360° Diversity Charter, we will conduct a strategic review of our approach to diversity, in order to develop a new, next generation diversity and inclusion plan for the future.
Our remit on diversity empowers us and drives our approach, which is to commission programmes that showcase exceptional talent drawn from the widest talent pools. We not only seek to entertain our audiences but also endeavour to show modern, diverse Britain in all of its forms on screen.

In 2017, 86% of our programmes met our Commissioning Diversity Guidelines, which set genre-specific diversity targets on and off screen. This is the highest level we have achieved since we introduced the guidelines three years ago, and it has led to greater on-screen diversity in programmes such as 8 Out Of 10 Cats, First Dates, How to Get Fit Fast and Food Unwrapped. This has also resulted in more people from diverse backgrounds working behind the camera, in programmes such as The Secret Life of 4 and 5 Year Olds, Ackley Bridge, The Undateables and our First Cut documentary strand.

Our programmes also appealed to diverse audiences. Factual programmes specifically covering diversity issues had a particularly strong pull for our BAME audiences, including The Truth About Muslim Marriage (18% BAME viewing share vs 5.2% share for all individuals), My Week As A Muslim (24.7% BAME share vs 8.5% share for all individuals) and Extremely British Muslims (15.6% BAME share vs 5.6% share for all individuals).

This appeal was not limited to diversity-related documentaries and applied also to a range of programmes in other genres, such as Child Genius (17.4% BAME share vs 8.7% share across all individuals) and May vs Corbyn: The Battle for Number 10 (14.7% BAME share vs 11.9% share for all individuals).

This is done across all genres, from Sport (UEFA Women’s Euros, World Para Athletics Championships), to Features (The Autistic Gardener, Can I Catch It?), Entertainment (The Last Leg, The Crystal Maze), Factual Entertainment (The Undateables, Gogglebox), Drama (Ackley Bridge, Born to Kill) and Specialist Factual (Random Acts, Grayson Perry: Divided Britain). The fall, by 48%, in hours of first-run originated diversity content in 2017 is attributable to the greater number of hours in 2016 broadcast for the 2016 Rio Paralympics.

In total across 2017, Food Unwrapped and its specials reached 17.1 million people (or 34% of the UK TV viewing population), with 30% of viewers saying that they went on to talk about the programme with others. Meanwhile, How To Stay Well reached 4.9 million people, with 80% of viewers saying they felt informed by the programme.

Helen Lawal

Born in Nigeria and having grown up in Leeds, Dr Helen Lawal is a GP and sexual health specialist. One of our rising diverse talents, she was introduced to British audiences in 2017 as the co presenter of our myth busting prime time health programme How To Stay Well alongside Dr Javid Abdelmoneim and Dr Phil Kieran.

Dr Helen went on to present hit series Food Unwrapped, which saw her travel the world to explore the industry secrets behind our favourite foods. This series did particularly well at engaging BAME people, with two episodes ranking in our top ten shows for BAME audiences, showing that the subjects tackled by Dr Helen were relevant across all demographics.
Spotlight on diverse directors

As part of our Spotlight on Directors initiative, our Creative Diversity team funded and worked with Mariam Mohamed to help her transition from being a Shooting Assistant Producer (AP) to Director.

Marian explains: “I was funded by Channel 4 for three months to work with BAFTA-winning filmmakers Pete Beard and Dave Nath at their new independent production company Story Films.

It has been incredibly exciting having the freedom to develop my own film ideas with both of them, while also working across in-house drama and factual development. The transition period from AP to Director can be challenging, so to be able to work towards that with Pete and Dave – who I deeply respect as filmmakers – has been a real privilege.

Channel 4 Pop Up events held across the UK – including three in Birmingham, Bristol and Belfast. Across all attendees, 31% were BAME, 16% LGBT and 8% were disabled.

We also boosted our Deputy Commissioning Editor commitment, where we fund a number of Deputy Commissioning Editors over two years, including one year within the Channel 4 commissioning team. In 2017, we supported four diverse commissioning executives (up from three in 2016), who completed a 12-month immersive commissioning experience with our Factual Entertainment, Features, Comedy and Specialist Factual departments. We also retained one of 2016’s candidates in our Drama department, who now works on programmes including Hollyoaks and Ackley Bridge.
Four New Frontiers

Where 2016 had an additional focus as the ‘Year of Disability’, 2017 was a year of ‘Four New Frontiers’, which allowed us to make an impact in four new areas. These were BAME progression, diverse directors, diversity in advertising and social mobility.

We recorded many achievements on screen, in production and inside our organisation in 2017. The Four New Frontiers helped us to identify areas that we will continue to develop in the future, to ensure that we retain our position as the UK’s most diverse broadcaster.

The 360° Diversity Charter has now been in operation for three years and it has served its purpose very effectively, kick-starting a more comprehensive and, above all, energetic approach to diversity – impacting our content, the diversity of Channel 4’s workforce and of our overall supply chain.

It is also now possible to see that the example we set as a business and as an employer – to our competitors and partners, in other areas of the private and public sectors, in the UK and across the world – has acted as a significant catalyst for others to change.

Nevertheless, we recognise that our journey to becoming a truly diverse and inclusive organisation has only just begun. Channel 4 might perform well within the industry, but that does not mean to say it performs well enough. This is certainly true for BAME inclusion: internal research in 2017 showed us that retention and progression of BAME staff are particular issues. We have therefore announced a strategic review of our approach to diversity, to be completed in 2018, to develop a new, next generation diversity and inclusion plan for the future, which will include greater levels of ambition in the targets that we set ourselves on screen, in production and in our own organisation.

“Our journey to becoming a truly diverse and inclusive organisation has only just begun.”

Embedding diversity between our programmes

One of our Four New Frontiers in 2017 was to boost diversity between our programmes – such as in advertisements, our idents and promotional films – in order to improve the diversity of TV advertising and incentivise the industry to change. Across our ad sales and marketing departments, we developed innovative ways to engage audiences with diversity between our programmes.

We launched a competition offering £1 million worth of airtime to the advertiser that develops the best advert championing diversity. Lloyds Banking Group, the winner, will see its advert air in 2018.

We also formed a task force bringing together advertisers, agencies and trade bodies to build a strategy for change and launched innovative diversity-led campaigns for a variety of clients.

Finally, we also improved diversity in our own major marketing campaigns. Channel 4’s new idents celebrated inclusion, diversity, Britain, youth and our alternative voice.

We will continue to champion diversity between our programmes in 2018 and beyond.
“We’re delighted to have attracted the largest-ever TV audience for a women’s international match.”

UEFA Women’s EURO 2017

As a programme genre, Sport provides fertile opportunities to make significant advances in on screen diversity, both through the range of sporting events that are transmitted and the approach taken to their coverage on TV. Channel 4 has transformed the coverage of disability sports over the last decade. This year, our decision to broadcast the UEFA Women’s EURO 2017 tournament helped to address the significant imbalance between coverage of men’s and women’s football on the main UK TV channels.

During UEFA Women’s EURO 2017, we committed to live coverage of all of the knock out games featuring England and Scotland, and all of the quarter finals, semi finals and final on Channel 4 and More4. Moreover, every single tournament match was available live on All 4, which also hosted a daily highlights show of the best action.

Match coverage benefited from a first class line up of diverse commentators, which included Clare Balding, Ian Wright, Jermaine Jenas and three of the women’s game’s most capped players – Chelsea Ladies’ Eni Aluko, Arsenal Ladies’ Heather O Reilly and England’s record goalscorer Kelly Smith.

Our coverage was well received by the UK public, with the championships reaching a total of 15.7 million people, equivalent to 26% of the TV population. TV audiences were substantially higher than those for the last tournament four years ago: viewing was up by 55% compared to the Women’s EURO 2013, which aired on BBC Two and BBC Three.

Viewers praised the fact that a mainstream broadcaster was covering the tournament in prime time, with 74% of viewers describing the coverage as “entertaining” and 71% stating it was “high quality”.

Our most viewed match, the England vs Netherlands semi final, averaged 3.4 million viewers, peaking with 4.2 million, making it the biggest ever women’s football game on UK television by a margin of over one million.

Our coverage was an unrivalled success for Channel 4 and helped to raise the profile of women’s football in the UK.
Channel 4 has a unique operating model – a publicly-owned organisation that is entirely self-funding, with a remit to experiment and take risks. That means that, for us, innovation is about pushing the boundaries both commercially and creatively. This drives our commissioning decisions, informs how we use technology to reach audiences, and encourages us to find new commercial approaches.

A record year for All 4

719m programme views initiated on All 4 (+16%)
16.6m registered users on All 4 (+11%)

190 new and one-off programmes were shown (between 6pm and midnight) (+9%)
1.98bn Channel 4 News video views on Facebook and YouTube

Innovation drives our creative strategy. We commission more programme titles than any other broadcaster, taking more risks with new programme ideas to find winning formats and programmes.

In 2017, we remained at the cutting edge of innovation in the media sector: experimenting with new programme formats in order to produce fresh, original and accessible content; forging new commercial partnerships to ensure we remain competitive within an increasingly crowded marketplace; and harnessing technology so that we continue to best serve and reach audiences.

2018 ambitions

- All 4 will remain a standalone content destination and explore new curated channels that offer the very best must-watch content from our 35-year library of programmes alongside new handpicked acquisitions. We will also continue to showcase the best international drama via Walter Presents.
- Our News and Current Affairs team is exploring virtual reality technology that will offer fully immersive experiences for viewers, bringing the world to their fingertips.
- We will continue to experiment with innovative programmes, such as Kiss Me First, the first mainstream British TV drama to combine live action with state-of-the-art computer-generated virtual world sequences.
All 4

Since relaunching in 2015, our online channel All 4 has continued to grow strongly. With 16.6 million registered users by the end of 2017, viewing increased by 16% in 2017 on our All 4 apps and platforms, with a record 719 million video views over the year.

In 2017, we completed the roll-out of a new version of the platform, with personalisation at its heart. This personalised experience is based on viewing history, ensuring that recommended content is tailored to our users’ viewing habits – it is based on what users watch and what people like them watch, rather than on who they are.

This new version of All 4 comes with mandatory sign-in, leading to an increase in the frequency of use and an increase in engagement, with log-ins reaching four million per month by the end of the year.

‘Stunt’ launches were a successful innovation for All 4 in 2017, whereby the first episode of a programme is aired on television to whet viewers’ appetites, with the remainder of the series made available online. These were primarily used with Walter Presents, our curated channel dedicated to quality foreign language programming. Every month in 2017, a Walter Presents title was stunt-launched on Channel 4, before the box set was distributed through All 4.

We also did our first stunt launch for Channel 4 originated content last year, with The End of the F***ing World (TEOTFW), an eight-part darkly comic road trip tale co-produced with Netflix.

The first episode of TEOFFW premiered on Channel 4 in October, after which the rest of the box set became immediately available on All 4. By stunt-launching the programme, we were able to introduce it to a wider audience than it would otherwise attract. This strategy proved very successful, with the series being viewed by 3.1 million users within 100 days of the programme launching. It also became our most binge-watched series ever, with 69% of those who watched episode two on All 4 – following the stunt launch on E4 – finishing the whole series on the same day.

Careful curation

All 4’s popularity has been driven by a mixture of expert curation, catch-up programming and programmes available exclusively on the platform, such as the entire back catalogue of Dawson’s Creek, The Island USA with Bear Grylls and Comedy Blaps. None of the other main PSBs offers such a varied mix of content on their on-demand services.

Research shows that 35% of TV viewers say they will only try a new show if they’re confident that it is “great”, so curation forms a key part of All 4’s proposition.

This is exemplified by the popularity of Walter Presents, which combines Channel 4’s creative, technical and commercial innovation. Handpicked by Walter Presents curator Walter Iuzzolino, these carefully selected world dramas are exclusively available free to UK viewers, with no subscription required. It is now the go-to destination for fans of world drama and those curious to discover more. Without Walter Presents, most – if not all – of these titles would not be available in any form to UK viewers.

The service now includes 61 titles from 17 countries and its library features around 643 hours of curated content, including Mexican thriller and International Emmy-winner Mr Avila, Czech historical drama and Czech Lion award-winner Burning Bush and the hit German drama Deutschland 83, which will return for a second series in 2018. In March 2017, Walter Presents also premiered in the US through a venture between Channel 4 and Global Series Network, with 34 series available to view from 12 countries.

Building on this success, All 4 will continue to develop this strategy in the future, anticipating the launch of new curated channels in addition to Walter Presents, mining Channel 4’s 35-year library of programmes and featuring new handpicked acquisitions to create collections of the very best must-watch programmes.
“The series as a whole is a brilliant, concise and emotionally charged bit of British dramedy. It is an effing triumph.”

Radio Times
(The End of the F***ing World)

The full box set of The End of the F***ing World became immediately available on All 4

3.1m users watched the series within 100 days of the programme launching

69% finished the whole series in the same day
Innovative programme making

As well as constantly refreshing and updating much-loved programmes in the schedule, Channel 4 brought hundreds of new shows to the screen in 2017. On the main channel alone, in the evening period when most people are watching (between 6pm and midnight), 190 new and one-off programmes were shown this year. Innovative new shows covered a range of topics, including citizenship and social issues.

One example was The Trial: A Murder in the Family, a ground-breaking five-part series in which a fictional crime was subject to an authentic trial by a team including eminent practising QCs, a genuine judge and a jury of 12 members of the public. The only actors were the accused – a man who was pleading not guilty to the murder of his wife – the deceased and some of the witnesses.

This drama-documentary hybrid, directed by BAFTA-winner Nick Holt, hooked viewers with the real twists and turns of a criminal murder trial and revealed the inner workings of the justice system as never seen before. This innovative concept was successful, particularly among 16-34-year-olds, with viewing share amongst this demographic 44% higher than the slot average. In total, the programme reached six million people (10.2% of the population).

Other programmes helped to bring British history to younger audiences through innovative formats, as with Mutiny.

230 years ago, British navy ship HMS Bounty was sailing from Tahiti to the West Indies when, during the 17-month voyage, a mutiny broke out and the ship’s captain, Captain William Bligh, along with a handful of loyal men, were forced into a tiny open boat. Instead of dying as expected, Captain Bligh and his crew navigated 4,000 miles to safety, through some of the world’s most remote and unforgiving seas.

Mutiny was a unique experiment that followed the ups and downs of nine modern men, who travelled across the Pacific Ocean in a replica 23-foot open wooden boat, with the same equipment and rations of food and water as Captain Bligh and his shipmates.

In addition to being an intense survival challenge, the programme was also an exciting new way of getting under the skin of one of history’s great adventure stories.

The programme performed well, averaging two million viewers across the five episodes. Mutiny performed particularly well for older children (viewing amongst 10-14-year-olds was 26% above slot average) and 16-34-year-olds (viewing share was 18% above slot average), demonstrating how innovative approaches can engage younger audiences in genres such as history.

Innovation in advertising

Innovation runs through the entire Channel 4 business – from experimental production techniques and programme formats, right through to ground-breaking advertising breaks and commercial firsts.

An example of this is our partnership with the Royal National Institute of Blind People (‘RNIB’) and five advertisers during National Eye Health Week in September, when we launched a unique campaign to raise awareness of the importance of eye care. Broadcast during The Undateables, the ads enabled viewers to ‘see’ an ad break through the eyes of those living with sight loss conditions.

The application of different visual filters across ads for O2, Paco Rabanne, Amazon Echo, Freeview and Specsavers illustrated the five most common eye conditions in the UK: macular degeneration (which affects the central part of a person’s vision), cataracts (which cause sight to become cloudy), eye conditions caused by diabetes (which can affect the blood vessels at the back of the eye), hemianopia (in which people lose half of their vision) and glaucoma (a condition that damages the optic nerve).

The fully audio-described ad break was an industry first, developed through our creative arm PL4Y and produced by our award-winning in-house creative agency, 4Creative. Each brand – which took on significant risk to allow their own crafted adverts to be “distorted” by the visual filters – also donated 10% of their production fee to the RNIB, in support of National Eye Health Week.

Towards the end of the year, we also announced our investment in the European Broadcaster Exchange (‘EBX’), becoming its unique UK partner. Expected to launch trading in early 2018, the EBX is a digital multi-territory ad sales joint venture between ProSiebenSat.1 (Germany), TF1 (France), Mediaset (Italy and Spain) and Channel 4.

Our investment allows us to cater for the exponential demand in the programmatic, on-demand video ad market, which grew at an annual rate of 45% in 2017 in Western Europe. It has the added benefit of forging closer strategic and commercially successful partnerships with key broadcasters in European markets which, in turn, will generate new digital revenues for Channel 4 to reinvest back into the UK creative sector.
Video content on social media in 2017

6.5bn

Views across Facebook, Instagram and YouTube

4.3bn

Facebook views across Channel 4’s three top channel brands

Leading the field in social media

Channel 4 News continues to be one of the UK’s biggest video news brands on social media. In 2017, videos across the Channel 4 News portfolio received 1.98 billion views across Facebook and YouTube.

In addition, Unreported World now has its own YouTube channel, with new videos being uploaded every Wednesday and Sunday – from the current series plus re-publishing classics from its 20-year archive – with some videos garnering in excess of one million views.

Building on the success of Channel 4 News’ video content in social media, Channel 4, E4 and All 4 have also experienced explosive growth on social media this year. This has resulted in Channel 4 being ranked 47th globally for social video at year end – higher than much bigger organisations such as Netflix, Amazon, ITV and Sky and higher also than key challenger brands such as Vice. This success is crucially important in showing that Channel 4 can engage with younger audiences in new ways.

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It was a record-breaking year for our pages on social media, with our entire network’s video content being viewed over 6.5 billion times across Facebook, Instagram and YouTube – this is more than double the number in 2016. The content also amassed 111.5 million engagements – such as likes, comments and sharing – in 2017, against 55.2 million in 2016.

Our approach to social video has been an iterative process to test, learn and roll out best practice. This strategy has paid dividends: on Facebook, with a combined 4.3 billion views, Channel 4’s three top channel brands (Channel 4, E4 and All 4) together generated 83% more views than the BBC’s top three (BBC One, BBC Two and BBC Three) combined in 2017.

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Channel 4’s reach on Twitter also continued to grow in 2017, showing that our programmes stimulate debate online, particularly among young people – indeed, more than half of Twitter users are aged 16-34. Our most tweeted programme of the year, The Great British Bake Off, was mentioned in close to one million tweets. This was followed by May vs Corbyn Live: The Battle for Number 10 (with 862,000 tweets) and Hollyoaks (515,000 tweets).

“Innovation runs through the entire Channel 4 business – from experimental production techniques and programme formats, right through to ground-breaking advertising breaks and commercial firsts.”