



Children's radio: a vital medium

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*** PRESS NOTICE ***

MPs want BBC radio network for children ...

29 MPs have endorsed Early Day Motion [EDM 378] calling for a BBC radio network dedicated to children. The Motion, tabled by **John Leech**, Liberal Democrat MP for Manchester Withington, has attracted signatories across all Parties.

In 2011 the BBC abandoned its remit to provide radio for children and moved family listening to R4Extra - the network licensed for horror, sci-fi and adult comedy. Responding to complaints that conflicted schedules could endanger young listeners the BBC confirmed R4Extra to be an adult network and advised parental monitoring. *"This makes radio a no-go platform of contention rather than a place of family enjoyment and discovery,"* says broadcaster, **Susan Stranks**, who coordinates the **Sound Start Group** of parents and child-care professionals campaigning for a children's public radio network. *"Children need commercial-free radio to serve their needs just as adults do".*

The BBC also faced complaints last month about sexually explicit content on Radio 4, during school holidays, when a repeat of late night discussion, 'Summer Nights', featuring explicit discussions of masturbation, swinging, orgasms, and sex toys, replaced 'Today in Parliament' during the Recess. A play featuring gay sex on the internet also raised concerns.

Mail on line report <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2394037/Radio-4-swaps-politics-porn-explicit-talk-BBC-attacked-replacing-Today-Parliament-sex-scenes-recess.html#ixzz2eNfmTK00>]

New BBC policy also replaced radio for children aged under-six with internet down-loads, which disadvantages families without the technology.

The Baroness Warnock, who chairs the Sound Start Group, has welcomed the EDM 378. She says. *"Increasing numbers of children are arriving at reception class unable to express their needs or understand simple instructions, which inhibits their schooling, social development and future employment prospects. To talk we must first learn to listen and daily radio of song, stories, rhymes and games can greatly help."*

Notes: This afternoon [09/09/2013] Lord Patten, Chair of the BBC Trust, and Mark Thompson, former BBC Director General, face parliamentary questions about inflated severance deals for BBC Executives.

The BBC Trust Review of Children's Services is due for publication this month.

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EDM 378 – Non-Commercial National Radio Station for Children

That this House recognises the benefits to children of specialist radio programming, including the stimulation of communication, concentration and memory; notes that, in 2011, the BBC reduced the number of hours of children's programming in the radio schedule by 75 per cent; further notes that the remainder of these programmes have been moved to the primarily adult station of Radio 4extra; further recognises that by moving children's programming onto primarily adult channels constant parental supervision is required; believes that despite claims from the BBC, the success of commercial children's radio stations such as Fun Kids and abracadabra! demonstrates the desire among audiences for radio stations aimed exclusively at providing children's content; and as a result calls for the creation of a non-commercial national radio station for children.