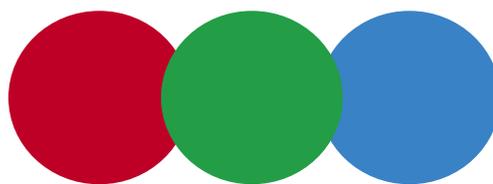


# Children Deserve The Best Television



Let's be honest, a lot of the television children watch today is pretty awful. Low production values, inappropriate content, and mind numbing entertainment shows that teach them all the wrong values. But that's just the prime time TV they sit and watch with their parents.

The only real problem with children's TV – that's programmes and channels aimed specifically at children – is that we don't value them enough. UK originated, quality children's television is currently under threat and if we don't wake up and start shouting about it then we're going to lose it altogether. ITV has stopped commissioning new shows and will effectively be pulling out of commissioning UK originated content. Five has also reduced commissioning and it's likely that all other commercial broadcasters will have to follow suit and turn instead to bought in shows from the US and Asia.

Save Kid's TV believes in the importance of quality, UK produced children's television and we are trying to make sure it survives the media upheavals that threaten its survival. The crisis has come about because of a number of factors but the most important has been the collapse of Citv. ITV was the biggest commercial investor in original, UK children's programmes. The cold hard fact is that as far as ITV is concerned there is not enough money to be made out of children's programmes. That's the truth. There have been some amazing success stories – *Teletubbies*, *Bob the Builder* – but they are few and far between and come at the end of a long development process costing a lot of money.



With the *Teletubbies* (left) celebrating their 10 yrs on television, the latest programme from Ragdoll, is *In the Night Garden* (right) devised and produced by Anne Wood and Andy Davenport, the co-creators of the *Teletubbies* ©.

*In the Night Garden*™ Ragdoll Worldwide Limited

Our campaign was launched just over a year ago at Showcommotion, the annual children's television conference in Sheffield. There's still a long way to go but we have made significant progress. We now have a coalition of groups campaigning on the issues around children's television, including The Writers Guild, the Voice of the Listener and Viewer, and the actors' union Equity. Ofcom, the government's broadcasting regulator, has brought forward its review of public service television and is looking specifically at kid's TV and the significant changes that have taken

place in children's use of media. There has been an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons highlighting the crisis and a debate in the House of Lords that was broadly supportive of the role children's television can play in the development of young people.

BBC Four recently broadcast a series of programmes about the history of children's TV and it was astonishing the range and quality of programmes children have enjoyed over the last fifty years. Great writing, fantastic characters, and wonderfully creative programme making driven in part, as always, by the need to stretch ridiculously tiny budgets. And that is the key to our campaign – children deserve the best television. Children's TV is one of the few places where children are allowed to be children. It's a place where they can watch age appropriate content, where the language spoken is their language, and where children are at the centre of the stories, not as peripheral characters in an adult drama. It's a place where they can start to understand their own community and culture, as well as beginning to explore the wider world. And it's a place we will need to work hard to protect in the changing media landscape.

Colin Ward

"The future provision of high quality programming for children appears to be under threat" said Peter Phillips of Ofcom. In a just published report (3.10.07) it was noted that only 17% of all children's programmes broadcast were from the UK. ITV have recently ditched children's programming from its afternoon schedule on its main channel, arguing that it no longer makes commercial sense, and the BBC is believed to be considering a plan to move its children's programmes from BBC1 to BBC2. Independent producers have warned that the sector has been thrown into crisis by the decline in investment from the BBC's commercial rivals. Ofcom's research shows that investment in original programming by ITV, Channel 4 and Five has halved in real terms since 1998. Ofcom offer a series of possible solutions ranging from doing nothing (!) to tax breaks for independent producers to creating a new publicly funded children's channel.

Save Kids TV can be found at  
[www.savekidstv.org.uk](http://www.savekidstv.org.uk)

Petition: Make sure kids get the best television  
by signing the campaign petition at  
<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/kidstelevision/>