



BBC branded 'irresponsible' for cutting children's radio

THE BBC has been "irresponsible" to cut down children's radio in the mistaken belief that they always need visual stimulation, according to Susan Stranks, the former presenter of the television series *Maggie*.

BBC executives "don't understand children any more" and fail to appreciate that radio is "equally if not more important than" television in inspiring children, she said.

Stranks added that while adults now have a huge choice, children today get less radio output than they did in the Forties through *Children's Hour* alone.

In 2011, the BBC axed more than 1,000 hours of children's programmes on digital station Radio 7, to be replaced by content for older children and their parents on Radio 4 Extra and a CBeebies radio show online.

But Stranks said that children had stopped listening because the content had become "patronising" and warned

Susan Stranks was a *Maggie* presenter and launched the world's first digital radio station for children



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actor, who said his recent working regime had been gruelling, said: "I feel like a massive weight has been lifted off my shoulders. I can just count down now to Christmas and look forward to some family time." Abbey Clancy scored the

highest marks in Saturday's show for her Viennese waltz with Aljaz Skorjanec (top).

Meanwhile, Dawson's partner, Ola Jordan, told the *Sunday People* that she was considering not returning to the show for the next series.

that revelations of Jimmy Savile's reign of abuse showed that "unless you safeguard children, we all suffer".

Her criticisms feature in a new book by Garry Vaux called *Legends of Kids TV 2*, which contains stories and opinions from 45 stars spanning more than 50 years of children's television.

"I've been campaigning for over 30 years for a national children's radio network," she said. "I believe radio is equally, if not more important, for young children than television, but the BBC will not listen."

"In the vast expansion of radio choice for grown-ups, today's children get less public radio than *Children's Hour* provided in the 1940s, when the Home Service was the only available platform. It's so irresponsible."

Stranks, best known as a co-presenter of ITV's *Maggie* from 1968 to 1974, launched the world's first digital radio station for children, in 2001, called abraCaDABra!, which is now run as a non-profit internet station.

A BBC spokesman said: "Children's media habits have changed at a phenomenal rate, and they are now accessing programmes in very different ways. We believe the best way to reach them with audio content is through a mix of downloadable podcasts they can listen to at any time and family-friendly radio programmes."