



Channel 4
124 Horseferry Road
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ADHD UK
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By email only

10 August 2026

Dear Mr Shelford

The Great ADHD Myth?

Thank you for your letter dated 4 August 2026, which I have been passed. I am the Head of Documentaries and Factual Entertainment at Channel 4.

In your letter you have laid out a number of concerns about the forthcoming Channel 4 documentary *The Great ADHD Myth?* I would like to make it clear at the outset that the documentary in no way seeks to dispute the lived experience of people with ADHD or that people with an ADHD diagnosis face real challenges. We are aware that many people experience severe difficulties, and this is acknowledged within the programme. The programme hears first hand from a family whose child has an ADHD diagnosis and the difficult choices that they face both at home and at school on a daily basis.

Channel 4 has a remit which includes offering a platform for alternative views, stimulating public debate and challenging the status quo. Whilst you have stated in your letter that ADHD is not scientifically controversial, it is undeniable that there is considerable public debate on various aspects of ADHD; including in relation to the prescribing of medication and diagnostic procedures. In the context of Channel 4's remit it is legitimate for that debate to be explored and for conventional understandings to be challenged.

With the above in mind the title of the show has been posed as a question intentionally. The programme seeks to encourage debate. The title is not a definitive statement.

We note that you have raised concerns about the inclusion in the programme of a boy who stops taking his medication. The observational study of one boy is not presented as anything more than that in the programme. The programme does not seek to provide answers from one family's experiences, but rather use their experiences to open up debate around how ADHD symptoms are dealt with in society. The welfare of the boy and his family were of paramount importance both before, during and after the production process. An independent doctor, his GP, a medical risk assessment company and three independent psychiatrists were all engaged to advise on the medication break.

We note you have raised a complaint about the press release relating to the programme. You are specifically concerned that boys aged 10-14 are identified as being the group most prescribed ADHD

medication. NHS data for England in 2025 / 2026 shows that male patients aged 10 to 14 were the largest prescribing group across all age and gender groups, for CNS stimulants and ADHD drugs in 2025 / 2026, with 60,976 identified patients. Males aged 15 to 19 were the next largest group with 47,140 identified patients. Figures from the NHS Business Services Authority, via their quarterly summaries show that this is a consistent trend historically.

You have requested a preview of the film, and have also made some suggestions as to what it might include. We appreciate that ADHD UK is a campaigning organisation with a legitimate interest in the subject matter of this film. However, as we hope you will recognise, Channel 4 must maintain editorial independence over its programming. For this reason, although your suggestions have been noted, it would not be appropriate for Channel 4 to confirm to you, prior to broadcast, exactly what will and won't be included in the documentary or to provide you with an advance screening.

We are aware that you may not agree with everything that is said in the programme, however we hope that you agree that public discourse in this area is important and that there is space for various perspectives in the debate.

Yours sincerely

