Girls Can. Period.

People always say "don't feed the trolls", but I love a good debate and sometimes an issue is too weighty for 140 characters to do it justice. The feedback I have seen for "Girls Can Code" (which concludes tonight on BBC3) has been overwhelmingly positive. Only about 5% has been negative but it's followed 3 main points that I feel it's important to discuss.

First up, the title: where was the coding? Fair point, but the title is the hook. From an entertainment point of view I'm not sure how scintillating it would be to watch people write lines of code or how successful that would be in getting young women to think about a digital career. I think the show was good at demonstrating that there's so much more to technology than just coding.

Next up, the use of the term "girls" rather than "women". Again it's a matter of catchiness. "Young women can code" doesn't exactly roll off the tongue. If we wanted to take issue with language then I would drop the word "can" and call it "Girls Code", as this is exactly what many girls are doing—coding. My co-founder Jules, who wrote the initial code for Hassle.com, now works on managing product, which doesn't involve an

awful lot of coding. However, I often find her making up excuses to get her coding fix!

Here's the biggie: are we being sexist by centring the show on girls? Surely it's an issue with boys/men too? Of course it is, but you have to start somewhere! The Economist does a great job of highlighting the issue here. It's a documentary with a deliberately limited scope. I'm not sure how interesting a massive documentary focusing on a different section of society each month would be. My English teacher always told me focus is the key to any great story. Some of the sexism comments were too ridiculous and exhausting to even bother replying to.

It was a huge thing for me to agree to appear on the show. I felt vulnerable and nervous (Eileen told me she hid behind a cushion!). However I believe I can speak for Alice, Eileen, Debbie, Sue, Kate and Roberta when I say that we all joined in because we believe passionately that we need more young people interested in digital professions.

Allow me to give you a personal example. Hassle.com has been operational for just over 2.5 years—and in that time we have received just **one** CV from a woman seeking a developer role. Consider that we currently have 4 open roles for engineers and we've have been trying to fill these roles for 6 months and you can see we have a skills crisis. I am not just talking about the opportunity here for women, this is an opportunity for all. And one that if we do not take on could result in the UK falling behind other developed countries.

Technology is expected to deliver 50,000 jobs in London alone over the next decade. If the status quo stays unchanged, only 12,000 of those new jobs will go to women. A bigger fear for me is that we won't have 50,000 skilled people to fill the demand. The show highlighted the huge challenge we have ahead of us. Before starting the show I was told we would be working with 5 girls not at all interested in technology. When we started filming it became obvious that they weren't just uninterested, they didn't know anything about it at all! They spoke of employment in terms of traditional jobs like a banker, a lawyer, a secretary. When I mentioned roles such as UX, UI, Performance Marketing their faces went blank.

So by all means have your opinion and voice it. If the title pisses you off, well, so be it. I think BBC3 did a great job here—it piqued your interest. You watched it and you talked about it. Job done. However, don't let the main point be missed by dogmatism or pedantics about language—tech is here and the UK is leading the field. Hopefully the show will lift the lid off

the world of technology and make young women realise that there's a place for them in it. Because Girls Can.