

Government Response to House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee's 3rd Report of Session 2024–25 on “Media literacy”

Introduction

The government is grateful to the House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee for its report on “Media literacy.” The report examines the current state of media literacy in the UK, the challenges posed by the evolving digital landscape, and the opportunities to strengthen public resilience against misinformation and disinformation.

The Committee rightly highlights that media literacy is a foundational skill in the digital age, essential for enabling individuals to critically engage with content, navigate complex information environments, and make informed decisions. As the report sets out, the proliferation of online platforms and the increasing sophistication of misleading content have made it more important than ever to equip people with the tools to assess the reliability and intent of the information they encounter.

The government shares the Committee’s view that media literacy is a shared societal responsibility, involving collaboration across government, regulators, industry, civil society, and the education sector. We welcome the Committee’s recommendations and acknowledge the need for a coordinated and strategic approach to media literacy policy and delivery.

This response outlines the government’s position on the Committee’s conclusions and recommendations. It sets out the actions we are taking to improve media literacy across the UK, including through regulatory frameworks, and partnerships with key stakeholders such as Ofcom. The structure of this document corresponds to the Committee’s recommendations and provides a detailed response to each point raised in the report.

Chapter 2: The case for action

Conclusion of the report: A failure to prioritise media literacy in the UK presents a threat not only to individual citizens, but to democracy itself. New technology has transformed our media and information environment in recent years, with social media algorithms having a profound impact. As this combines with the growing popularity of generative AI, change and complexity are likely to accelerate. Statistics from Ofcom and others make clear that UK citizens are poorly equipped to navigate today’s increasingly crowded information environment. Urgent action from government is needed. (Paragraph 24)

Response: The government shares the Committee’s view that media literacy is fundamental to both individual empowerment and democratic resilience in today’s fast-

evolving digital environment. It equips citizens with the critical thinking skills needed to navigate complex information ecosystems, make informed choices, and participate confidently in civic life. We recognise the transformative potential and complex challenges posed by emerging technologies, including generative AI, and agree that sustained, proactive engagement is essential.

The UK's position as 13th out of 41 countries in the latest Media Literacy Index published by the Open Society Institute – Sofia¹ reflects a solid foundation, built on strengths in education, media freedom, and digital infrastructure. While international rankings are shaped by diverse contextual factors such as population size, cultural attitudes, and geopolitical dynamics, the government welcomes global collaboration as a valuable opportunity to refine and enhance our strategic direction.

This government is pursuing a strategic, cross-sector approach to media literacy, building on the 2021 Online Media Literacy Strategy and aligning with Ofcom's first three-year strategy, published in October 2024. Strengthening public resilience in the digital age remains a top priority, and we will evolve our approach to meet the demands of a rapidly changing technological landscape. To support this ambition, we are developing a vision statement that articulates the collective view and activity across government, reinforcing our shared commitment to improving media literacy and ensuring our efforts are coherent, impactful, and future-focused.

The Online Safety Act clarified and added specificity on Ofcom's media literacy duties in relation to services regulated under the Act. Among other duties, Ofcom is required to raise awareness and understanding of misinformation and harmful content, especially that which particularly affects vulnerable groups like women and girls. To meet these objectives, Ofcom needs to pursue, commission, or encourage other organisations to deliver media literacy activities and initiatives.

Furthermore, the Online Safety Act (OSA) lays the foundation for strong protections against illegal content and harmful material for children in the UK. The illegal harms codes and the protection of children codes came into force in March 2025 and July 2025 respectively, legally requiring all platforms in scope to have measures in place to remove illegal content on their platforms and to take robust, risk-based and proportionate steps to protect children from harmful content and experiences online.

The strongest protections in the Act are for children. Social media platforms, search services, and other user-to-user services likely to be accessed by children need to take steps to protect them from content which is harmful. This includes the use of features

¹ While the Open Society Institute's Media Literacy Index is often cited, it primarily reflects structural inputs such as the quality of education, media freedom, trust in society, and the usage of new tools of participation. It does not directly measure users' knowledge or behaviours and therefore offers only a partial view of media literacy outcomes.

such as highly effective age assurance (e.g. facial age estimation, ID checks) to prevent underage access to harmful content like pornography.

For the largest platforms (Category 1), there are a set of additional protections which include duties to comply with their own terms of service, and to offer adults user empowerment tools and user identity verification. As part of these additional protections, Category 1 services will have to proactively offer user empowerment tools to all registered adult users at the earliest possible opportunity. These tools allow users to choose whether to engage with content that encourages, promotes or provides instructions for suicide, self-harm, eating disorders, or that is abusive or incites hate based on race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or disability.

Chapter 3: Media literacy policy

Conclusion of the report: The issues that the 2021–24 Online Media Literacy Strategy aimed to tackle persist: the media literacy sector continues to be held back by an approach that favours small-scale, short-term initiatives. The lack of a public impact assessment of the strategy has further limited opportunities for evaluation and improvement. (Paragraph 34)

Recommendation of the report: The government should publish a detailed impact assessment of the 2021–24 Online Media Literacy Strategy. This should identify the lessons learned from its grant-funded pilots. The government must articulate next steps arising from the strategy, including how successful initiatives should be scaled and funded for long-term impact. (Paragraph 35)

Response: We recognise the significant value generated through the extensive evaluation work undertaken by grant-funded organisations under the 2021 Online Media Literacy Strategy. Each project was required to assess its impact, resulting in a rich and diverse evidence base that has meaningfully advanced government’s understanding of effective media literacy interventions. These insights have been thoroughly reviewed by DSIT and shared with partners across government to help shape future policy development and delivery planning. Collectively, they provide a strong foundation for continued progress and innovation.

The projects supported under the strategy have added value to the media literacy landscape by demonstrating innovation, reach, and tangible impact. While we do not intend to publish a formal public impact assessment of the strategy, key learnings from the pilot initiatives funded include:

- The importance of **co-design** and **peer-to-peer delivery** in enhancing participant engagement.
- The effectiveness of leveraging **existing networks** to support recruitment and sustained participation.

- The value of **tailoring interventions** to specific audiences, ensuring relevance and resonance across diverse communities.
- The benefit of **embedding media literacy within broader programmes** such as youth engagement, wider digital strategies, education, and family support to maximise reach and impact.
- The importance of **ongoing and effective evaluation** and feedback to refine delivery and strengthen outcomes.

Organisations were encouraged to publish their evaluation findings independently, and several have done so, helping to share best practice and amplify impact. Notable examples include:

- **The National Literacy Trust’s ‘Empower’ initiative**, which trained teachers and educated 3,746 students in alternative provision settings on women and girls’ online experiences. Evaluation findings indicated increased student awareness of news source trustworthiness, improved understanding of how news is presented, and greater recognition of social media’s impact on mental wellbeing.
- **Parent Zone’s ‘Everyday Digital’ initiative**, which provided media literacy resources and training to family-facing professionals, parents, and carers—reaching over 63,000 parents. Evaluation showed a 45% improvement in participants’ understanding of what media literacy means, alongside gains in practical skills such as setting digital boundaries and approaching online content critically.

This government remains committed to supporting scalable and sustainable initiatives that build on the valuable lessons learned through the 2021 Online Media Literacy Strategy. We continue to champion the work of trusted organisations whose efforts have made a meaningful contribution to advancing media literacy across the UK. These projects have not only delivered tangible impact but have also helped shape future opportunities for the sector by demonstrating what works and informing the design of new, inclusive approaches.

Importantly, the insights gained have directly influenced the development of broader government programmes, including embedding of media literacy principles and opportunities within the Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund. This ensures that media literacy is recognised as a vital enabler of digital confidence and participation, particularly for those at risk of exclusion.

In addition, research commissioned under the strategy explored barriers to adult engagement with media literacy efforts, including among parents, and identified practical strategies to improve participation. These findings, published on 12

September 2025, will play a key role in shaping future adult-focused interventions and ensuring our approach remains evidence-led, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of diverse communities.

Conclusion of the report: The government does not have a good track record of joined-up leadership on media literacy; we saw limited evidence of effective coordination across departments under the previous strategy. The reported lack of engagement from the Department for Education to date is a particular cause for concern. A new working group intended to coordinate media literacy efforts across government does not appear to have sufficient authority to drive effective cross-government cooperation and change in its current guise. (Paragraph 42)

Recommendation of the report: The government must evaluate the effectiveness of the new working group, and develop it as necessary, including by changing the frequency of its meetings and the seniority of participants, to ensure it genuinely delivers a joined-up approach across government departments. (Paragraph 43)

Response: In May 2025, this government established the new media literacy cross-government working group mentioned in the Committee's report to strengthen strategic alignment and operational delivery of media literacy policy. This proactive step reflects our commitment to strong, coordinated leadership and has already shown promising results. The group brings together representatives from all key policy areas, with consistently strong engagement that fosters effective collaboration and drives joined-up working. Its structure enables meaningful cooperation and strategic alignment, reinforced by regular ministerial engagement that ensures media literacy remains visible and reinforcing commitment across departments.

We recognise that effective leadership is essential to delivering a successful media literacy strategy, and this has been a clear priority. The working group marks a significant step forward in improving coordination and engagement across Whitehall. The group meets regularly, with oversight to ensure it remains fit for purpose and responsive to the evolving priorities of this policy area. This renewed approach is already helping to unlock new opportunities, strengthen collaboration, and ensure media literacy is embedded across relevant policy areas with clarity and purpose.

Recommendation of the report: The government must provide a clearer overall direction for media literacy work across Whitehall and translate Ofcom’s media literacy strategy into action. It must coordinate the work across education, public services and local government that is essential to deliver a comprehensive media literacy programme. This requires the nomination of a specific, senior minister to take responsibility for media literacy across government departments and to establish clearer lines of accountability on this issue to Parliament. (Paragraph 65)

Response: We agree with the Committee about the importance of clear, overall direction for media literacy work across government. This government will develop a **Media Literacy Vision Statement** to strengthen strategic clarity and articulate collective ambition. The statement will set out a shared vision for media literacy in the UK, articulating cross-government commitments and outlining how media literacy will be embedded across key policy areas including education, public services, digital inclusion, and community resilience. It will serve as a unifying framework that aligns departmental activity, supports strategic coherence, and ensures media literacy is recognised as a vital enabler of democratic participation and digital confidence.

We agree that a comprehensive and effective approach requires both strategic oversight and operational coordination. Ofcom, as the independent regulator, is well placed to lead delivery under its statutory duties in the Online Safety Act. Its three-year strategy, *A Positive Vision for Media Literacy*², sets out a credible and ambitious programme that includes strengthening the evidence base through research, engaging platforms to improve best practice and user support, and supporting the sector through partnerships and targeted interventions.

The government’s role is distinct but complementary. We are focused on coordinating media literacy efforts across departments, ensuring that media literacy is embedded in relevant policy areas and integrated into broader frameworks. This joined-up approach ensures media literacy is not treated in isolation but as a cross-cutting priority that supports wider goals around inclusion, resilience, and empowerment.

To support this, DSIT has established the cross-government media literacy working group detailed above. Minister Narayan holds clear ministerial responsibility for online media literacy coordination and strategy in government, and is actively championing its integration across departments, working closely with ministerial colleagues to ensure it receives the visibility and leadership it requires at the highest levels.

² Ofcom. (2024). *A Positive Vision for Media Literacy: Ofcom’s Three-Year Media Literacy Strategy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/making-sense-ofmedia/media-literacy/statement-ofcoms-three-year-media-literacy-strategy.pdf?v=382047>

Conclusion of the report: The government’s digital inclusion action plan is a positive example of a cross-departmental approach and provides a strong foundation on which to build. We welcome that it takes forward recommendations made in our 2023 report on tackling digital exclusion. However, media literacy should not be sidelined as a result of this shift in focus. The action plan makes limited reference to media literacy. Information provided to date about the Digital Inclusion Action Committee does not suggest that the topic will receive sufficient attention. (Paragraph 75)

Response: The government published the Digital Inclusion Action Plan in February which sets out the first steps we are taking towards our ambition of delivering digital inclusion for everyone across the UK, regardless of their circumstances.

We recognise that long-term systemic change is needed, and we will continue to work rapidly to address this complex issue. We will motivate people to go online by helping them understand the benefits, while empowering them with critical skills, including the key media literacy skills that are needed to keep themselves safe and informed once they are online.

Media literacy and digital inclusion go hand in hand, as individuals need the skills and confidence to engage safely, critically and effectively in the digital world. As set out in the government’s Digital Inclusion Action Plan, media literacy contributes directly to two of its four strategic pillars; “skills” and “confidence”. It equips individuals with the ability to evaluate information, recognise and manage digital risks, and make informed decisions online. This is particularly important for those newly online or at risk of exclusion, who may be more vulnerable to misinformation and harmful content. By embedding media literacy within digital inclusion efforts, the government aims to foster a more resilient, informed and empowered society, capable of navigating an increasingly complex digital landscape.

The government published a Call for Evidence alongside the action plan and sought views on our four focus areas. The focus areas are: Opening up opportunities through skills; Tackling data and device poverty; Breaking down barriers to digital services; and Building confidence and supporting local delivery. The call for evidence closed on 9 April and a summary of responses was published in July on GOV.UK.

Establishing the Digital Inclusion Action Committee was one of four leadership actions set out in the Action Plan. Its role is to scrutinise, steer and help determine the work of the government in reducing digital exclusion. The Digital Inclusion Action Committee Plenary Group met for the first time on 26 June 2025. The Committee’s membership and Terms of Reference have been published on GOV.UK.

The Digital Inclusion Action Committee membership includes three former members of the Media Literacy Taskforce. These are Emma Stone (Good Things Foundation), Simeon Yates (University of Liverpool) and David Lloyd (Libraries Connected).

All members of the Digital Inclusion Action Committee will contribute to work that will help drive economic growth and break down barriers to opportunity across the UK by engaging more people in the digital economy.

Recommendation of the report: The government must give much more explicit emphasis to media literacy in its action plan for digital inclusion, ensuring that it is recognised as a related, but discrete, area of work. The plan should serve as a catalyst for more joined-up work on media literacy, as well as digital inclusion. It should provide details of the “new initiatives” the government will develop to enable people to build key media literacy skills. Evaluation of initiatives carried out under the digital inclusion action plan must include specific reporting on improvements in media literacy skills. The minister with responsibility for media literacy must be a member of the ministerial group on digital inclusion to ensure that specific focus on media literacy is sustained. (Paragraph 76)

Response: DSIT is committed to ensuring that robust monitoring and evaluation is in place for Digital Inclusion Action Plan initiatives. This will allow us to understand whether key outputs and outcomes have been achieved, including the extent to which delivery of the Digital Inclusion Action Plan has furthered media literacy efforts.

One of the five first actions taken by this government to tackle digital exclusion was to launch the £9.5mn Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund. The competitive England Fund launched on 13 August with £7.242 million dedicated to supporting digital inclusion projects in England, with proportionate funding going to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The competitive fund is designed to support innovative interventions and to produce new knowledge on ‘what works’, building the evidence base on effective digital inclusion interventions. It is also designed to support best practice with the ambition to scale and replicate successful activities across England to increase digital participation. While it is difficult to predict what projects will ultimately receive funding, the fund open in England has been designed to ensure that projects to support media literacy are within scope.

Monitoring and evaluation is key to achieving the aims of the Innovation Fund; identifying ‘what works’ and where these successful interventions can be scaled to increase impact. DSIT is in the process of procuring an evaluation partner to conduct an independent process and impact evaluation of the Fund, which will be supported by monitoring data collected by grant recipients throughout the course of their projects. Consequently, to the extent that funded projects focus on supporting media literacy, these monitoring and evaluation activities will highlight any improvements to media literacy skills, and feasibility of scaling successful activities further.

The Digital Inclusion Ministerial Group has been established and met for the first time on 14 May 2025. Ministers from DSIT, DHSC, MHCLG, HMT, DWP and DCMS were invited to discuss how to ensure digital inclusion is at the heart of everything the government does. Minister Lloyd is the lead minister for digital inclusion, and represents DSIT interests in this ministerial group, including digital inclusion and media literacy.

Recommendation of the report: The Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund should include significant long-term investment in discrete media literacy programmes. In delivering it, the government should learn from the mistakes of the previous media literacy strategy and avoid contributing to further fragmentation and duplication across media literacy and digital inclusion initiatives. The government should articulate clearly how this work integrates with Ofcom’s programmes and builds on the regulator’s research into best practice. (Paragraph 77)

Response: We are taking an iterative approach to identifying what works in advancing digital inclusion. The Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund is a one-year fund for financial year 25-26, meaning that all projects must conclude by 31 March 2026. However, applicants will need to explain how their projects will result in long-lasting impacts beyond the funding period.

The Fund is designed to support a broad range of projects, tackling different aspects of digital exclusion. This includes supporting greater access to education and skills, including media literacy. Funded projects will be locally delivered, highly tailored and targeted interventions that meet the needs of digital excluded people. Consequently, it will be important to review the outcomes of the Fund, assess the wider evidence base and incorporate our learnings into future programmes. Learnings from previous media literacy grant schemes have been shared to inform the design of this Fund, helping to build on what has worked well.

Chapter 4: Technology and media companies’ contributions

Recommendation of the report: We recommend that the government establish stronger requirements on technology platforms to implement and evaluate media literacy interventions. Ofcom must be sufficiently empowered to take robust action to engage platforms in media literacy and hold them to account. (Paragraph 106)

Response: The government agrees that technology platforms have a critical role to play in promoting media literacy and ensuring users are equipped to navigate the online environment safely and confidently. The government’s recent Statement of Strategic Priorities (SSP) reaffirms our commitment to building an inclusive and resilient digital

society, with media literacy at its core. We have placed strong emphasis on Ofcom’s statutory duties in this area, making clear our expectation that the regulator takes an ambitious and proactive approach to promoting media literacy. This includes supporting users to critically assess online content and working with platforms to embed media literacy by design.

We welcome the growing commitment from industry to embed media literacy into platform design and user experience, recognising that this collaboration is essential to building a more informed and resilient digital society.

Under the Online Safety Act, platforms regulated by Ofcom are already required to assess risks and consider how media literacy measures may mitigate harm. Ofcom is actively working with platforms to embed media literacy by design and has published Best Practice Principles for Media Literacy by Design, which several major platforms, including Google, Pinterest, Roblox and Lego, have already pledged to adopt. These principles provide a non-exhaustive guide to how platforms can support users through design features, educational content, and partnerships.

The government supports Ofcom’s efforts and continues to work closely with the regulator to ensure platforms are prioritising supporting the media literacy of their users. We are committed to ensuring Ofcom has the powers and resources it needs to fulfil its duties robustly and effectively. Ofcom is required to publish annual progress reports against its strategy. In the first year, this requirement will be met through a statement in Ofcom’s annual report, due in July 2026, informed by a mid-term evaluation of its strategy.

Conclusion of the report: While some platforms have developed sustained partnerships with third-sector organisations, offering stable funding and brand visibility, platforms’ priorities can shift quickly. We reject an approach to long-term funding that relies on the goodwill of technology companies. (Paragraph 112)

Conclusion of the report: At a time of great financial challenges for both media organisations and government, we believe that the funding for large scale media literacy programmes should substantially come from the technology sector. The allocation of this funding would need to be managed by Ofcom or the government to preserve the independence of initiatives and delivery partners. (Paragraph 113)

Recommendation of the report: The government should develop mechanisms, including a levy on platforms, to secure long-term, stable funding from industry for independent media literacy initiatives. (Paragraph 114)

Response: The government welcomes the Committee’s ambition to build a media literacy landscape that is sustainable, independent and impactful. We recognise the

valuable and ongoing contributions made by technology companies to media literacy. Many platforms continue to show strong commitment to user safety and education through funding, co-design and integrated tools. Programmes such as Google's *Be Internet Legends*, Meta's *Get Digital* and Microsoft's *Digital Civility* have reached millions of users and helped promote safer online experiences.

We strongly value the independence of delivery partners and believe that maintaining a flexible and collaborative funding environment is key to supporting effective media literacy initiatives. Rather than centralising industry funding, we see greater benefit in continuing to build on the diverse and dynamic funding landscape that already exists. This includes support from government, local authorities, civil society and technology platforms. Such diversity allows for tailored approaches that reflect the needs of different communities and draw on the expertise of a wide range of delivery partners. It also encourages innovation and responsiveness, helping the sector to adapt quickly to emerging challenges and opportunities in the digital space.

We appreciate the interest in strengthening media literacy through new funding approaches. While we understand the rationale for introducing a levy, we believe the current model offers a more effective and inclusive foundation. It encourages collaboration across sectors, supports voluntary investment and aligns with statutory responsibilities. A levy could introduce challenges for platforms and users and may reduce the sector's ability to respond quickly to emerging risks. It could also limit innovation by placing additional pressures on smaller platforms and creating complexity in how funding is managed. Our priority is to maintain a diverse and responsive media literacy ecosystem that continues to evolve and deliver meaningful impact.

Introducing a levy could place additional pressure on businesses and overlap with existing funding arrangements already established through the Online Safety Act 2023. Under the Act, companies raising revenue from online services will cover the cost of regulation. Ofcom are currently finalising plans to implement the fees and penalties regime, following public consultation.

Before services are invoiced for fees, the government has ensured that Ofcom has sufficient funding in place to deliver online safety regulation effectively. The allocation of funding followed a business case procedure in which Ofcom submitted its requirements. Overall, Ofcom has a budget of £92 million in place for 2025/26 to cover online safety regulatory activity and associated costs. This includes funding for media literacy duties.

Ofcom is responsible for determining how much funding is required and allocated to media literacy, alongside its other regulatory duties. From 2026/27, Ofcom will collect fees equal to the amount necessary to perform its regulatory duties, in accordance with

the required statement of charging principles and within Ofcom's spending cap set by the government.

The government remains committed to ensuring that media literacy initiatives are well-funded, independent, and effective. We believe that a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach which is underpinned by statutory duties, voluntary best practice, and targeted investment offers the most sustainable path forward.

Conclusion of the report: Advances in technology amplify both the value of professional journalism, and the fragility of the industry's future. We reiterate the recommendation made in our report on the future of news that the government should recognise more explicitly the value of a financially sustainable news sector. This represents the best way to maintain a shared understanding of facts. (Paragraph 129)

Conclusion of the report: Local news supports media literacy within communities through relevant and trusted news provision. Grassroots initiatives supporting communities to produce their own local journalism are also valuable. We are concerned that, despite recognising the vital but vulnerable role of the local media sector, the government has not yet taken steps to support it. (Paragraph 130)

Recommendation of the report: The government must publish its local media strategy by the autumn of 2025. This should take into account the important role of local journalism in supporting media literacy. (Paragraph 131)

Response: As set out in the response to the Committee's future of news report, the government remains committed to supporting a free, sustainable and plural media landscape, as the best way to maintain a shared understanding of facts, including through our work on the Local Media Strategy to support local journalism.

DCMS ministers held a roundtable discussion with local news editors in the spring to discuss the planned approach and collaboration with industry on the Local Media Strategy. An industry working group has since been set up to consider the issues in more detail and has been meeting regularly since June. We recognise the importance of news literacy in the context of this work. Among other topics, discussions have explored the promotion of local journalism as a career among young people, with a view in part to helping underline the importance of this industry and the unique value of local journalism.

DCMS intends to publish the Local Media Strategy before the end of this year.

Conclusion of the report: Public service broadcasters make a significant contribution to media literacy through their provision of trusted and accurate news. The BBC's current work to support media literacy through its educational resources is useful, but we note that limited resource restricts its reach. We welcome the emphasis placed on the BBC's

role in supporting media literacy in the recent speech by Tim Davie and will examine the BBC's future work in this area as part of our remit to scrutinise the broadcaster. (Paragraph 146)

Response: The government welcomes the Committee's recognition of the BBC's vital role in promoting media literacy through trusted news and educational resources. We support the BBC's continued efforts in this area and note the importance of ensuring its work reaches audiences across the UK. As part of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's forthcoming Charter Review, the government will consider the BBC's work in supporting media literacy and its role in contributing to a healthy information ecosystem. We look forward to seeing how the BBC builds on this foundation, and we will continue to engage with the BBC and other stakeholders to explore how best to support and amplify these efforts.

Chapter 5: Media literacy for adults

Conclusion of the report: Media literacy is a vital life skill, but engaging adults in media literacy training is challenging. The public has low awareness of media literacy and its relevance to their daily lives. Our evidence emphasised the importance of media literacy training being delivered through existing trusted relationships within local communities. Framing media literacy training as a way to help parents to support their children to navigate their online environment may also encourage take-up. (Paragraph 174)

Conclusion of the report: The government is right to identify the importance of supporting people's digital skills at their points of interaction with public services. Libraries and librarians are particularly well placed to provide media literacy education for adults as they already serve the information and literacy needs of local communities. We were pleased to see the government highlight the role of public libraries in its digital inclusion action plan. (Paragraph 175)

Response: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) leads on policy relating to libraries, which play an important role in the broader media literacy landscape. There are around 2,600 public libraries in England and their trained library staff are well placed to support library users in using digital. A national survey published in February 2025 indicated that library staff give on average a third of their time to support patrons with digital skills and tasks. In addition, libraries provide access to PCs and free wi-fi and a number also offer the loan of portable devices, such as laptops/PCs/tablets/phones. Libraries help tackle the combined barriers of skills, confidence and motivation by offering skills training and helping people to understand the benefits that using the internet and accessing online services can bring.

Conclusion of the report: We support efforts to strengthen the ability of local organisations and public services to provide media literacy training. We restate that this must be seen as complementary to, but distinct from, digital inclusion initiatives. We recognise, however, that frontline services and community groups are already stretched in assisting users with other, urgent matters and have limited capacity to take on additional responsibilities. (Paragraph 176)

Recommendation of the report: The government’s digital inclusion action plan should build media literacy competencies by enabling more consistent support—for example through leveraging platforms’ funding—for initiatives delivered locally or through public services. The government must ensure that in relying on trusted local stakeholders for delivery, it does not place further strain on frontline services and community groups without providing additional funding and support. (Paragraph 177)

Response: The Digital Inclusion Action Plan – First Steps, published in February 2025, outlines the first five actions we are taking over the next year on digital inclusion.

These actions are our immediate steps to boost digital inclusion by widening access to devices, driving digital upskilling, breaking down barriers to participation and getting support to people in their own communities.

We agree that there must be support for frontline services and community groups. That is why a recent funding programme of £2 million supported six Mayoral Combined Authorities across England to deliver innovative and meaningful support for digitally excluded people in their communities.

The projects funded included the delivery of local digital inclusion programmes, such as training workshops in schools and via community touchpoints such as libraries; identifying gaps in mobile coverage; and maximising the re-use of tech to tackle device poverty and reduce electronic waste. The recipients were Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Northeast Combined Authority, West Midlands Combined Authority, East Midlands Combined Authority, and Greater London Combined Authority.

In addition, the FY 25/26 Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund launched on 13 August and will support digital inclusion projects across the UK. As mentioned previously, £7.242 million will support digital inclusion projects in England through a competitive grant process and aims to support innovative interventions to produce new knowledge on ‘what works’, building the evidence base on effective digital inclusion interventions. It is also designed to support best practice with the ambition to scale and replicate successful activities across England to increase digital participation.

Finally, the Digital Inclusion Action Committee includes a subcommittee specifically focussed on Local Delivery & Partnership. We recognise that long-term systemic change is needed, and we will continue to work rapidly to address this complex issue. We are working closely with the third sector, industry, Devolved Governments and local authorities to ensure future interventions are targeted to and based on individual needs.

Conclusion of the report: We welcome the government's plan to increase understanding of media literacy among the general population through a public awareness campaign. However, a standalone campaign is unlikely to drive lasting behaviour change. This must be accompanied by sustained media literacy activity. (Paragraph 183)

Recommendation of the report: In designing its campaign, the government should learn from international examples of best practice. Campaign messaging must be clear and direct audiences to additional resources and interventions providing more targeted, sustained support. The government should adopt an annual Media Literacy Week as part of sustained, year-round activity on media literacy. (Paragraph 184)

Response: The government welcomes the Committee's recognition of the importance of increasing public understanding of media literacy and fully supports the principle that any campaign should be part of a broader, sustained effort. Recent research undertaken highlights the value of ongoing engagement, trusted delivery channels and tailored support. These insights are helping to shape both campaign design and wider strategic planning.

We are committed to developing a public awareness campaign that is inclusive, evidence-informed and capable of driving meaningful behaviour change. International examples offer helpful lessons, and previous research has explored approaches in countries such as Finland, Ireland and Estonia, where national strategies and cross-sector coordination have supported positive outcomes. At the same time, we recognise that the UK's media literacy landscape is unique, with a diverse delivery ecosystem and a regulatory framework that places specific duties on platforms and on Ofcom.

While we believe that continuous engagement throughout the year is the most effective way to build lasting awareness and understanding, we will keep options such as an annual Media Literacy Week under consideration. However, we recognise that delivering such a campaign would require substantial input and coordination from the sector, and its impact would need to be carefully assessed. Our approach remains rooted in evidence and practice, and we will continue to listen to partners to ensure our efforts are responsive, relevant and grounded in what works. This aligns with Ofcom's consultation findings on its Three-Year Media Literacy Strategy, which emphasised the

value of sustained activity delivered through trusted local partners. Our focus remains on supporting long-term, community-led efforts that can adapt to the evolving digital environment and reach people in ways that are relevant and impactful.

Chapter 6: Media literacy for children and young people

Conclusion of the report: Engaging children and young people with media literacy during their time at school is a vital means of improving media literacy skills across the UK population. Unfortunately, witnesses painted a negative picture of the current levels of provision of media literacy education in English schools. (Paragraph 203)

Conclusion of the report: The evidence we received overwhelmingly supported enhancing the coverage of media literacy in the national curriculum and ensuring it is integrated within a number of subjects. Witnesses also highlighted a need for media literacy education to be rooted in a core subject to ensure universal provision, and for it to be taught from the preschool phase onwards. (Paragraph 204)

Conclusion of the report: As we identified in our recent report on the future of news, the government's ongoing curriculum and assessment review provides an ideal opportunity to enhance coverage of media literacy within the national curriculum. We welcome statements from government ministers, and the conclusions of the review's interim report, which suggest that media literacy will be a priority area of focus in the remaining phases of the review. (Paragraph 208)

Conclusion of the report: In addressing any related findings from the curriculum and assessment review, the government must ensure that media literacy is embedded across the national curriculum in a way that guarantees consistent, repeated engagement with the topic for all pupils. (Paragraph 209)

Recommendation of the report: It should also update the GCSE English Language curriculum to include media literacy skills development more explicitly and enable a wider range of media formats to be used as set texts. (Paragraph 210)

Response: The government agrees that media literacy education in schools is critical. We want all children to leave school with the knowledge, understanding and skills that enable them to use information and communication technology creatively and purposefully, whilst becoming discerning consumers of information.

There are already opportunities for media literacy skills to be taught through the national curriculum:

- In history, pupils learn to ask perceptive questions, think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, and develop perspective and judgement.
- The current English language GCSE curriculum equips students with critical reading and comprehension skills. They learn to identify and interpret themes in

diverse texts, read for various purposes, draw inferences, support viewpoints with evidence, and identify bias.

- In citizenship, pupils distinguish fact from opinion, understand freedom of speech, and recognise the media's role in shaping public opinion.
- In relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) pupils learn how to be a discerning consumer of information online, how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how and to whom to report issues.
- In computing, pupils learn how to use technology, including search engines, safely and responsibly, how data can be represented and manipulated digitally, and how to be discerning when evaluating digital content.

However, the government recognises that since the curriculum was last reviewed in 2013, the way in which people consume and receive information has changed. The independent Curriculum and Assessment Review (the Review), covering ages 5 to 18, is considering how to ensure that children and young people develop the knowledge and skills required to thrive as citizens, in work and throughout life.

The Review's interim report noted the rise of AI and trends in digital information and that it is necessary that the curriculum keep pace with these changes, including a renewed focus on digital and media literacy and critical thinking skills.

The Review's final report and recommendations will be published in autumn with the government's response. Once the Review has finalised recommendations and we know the extent of changes to consider, the government will decide how best to support teachers and leaders in implementing these changes. Passage of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill will ensure that, following the Review and the implementation of reforms, academies will be required to teach the reformed national curriculum, alongside maintained schools.

Additionally, the government has already acted to strengthen the curriculum in relation to the online safety aspects of media literacy. On 15 July 2025, the Department for Education published the revised statutory guidance on RSHE which schools will be required to teach from September 2026.

The updated guidance strengthens content on healthy relationships, and on mental health, with updated content to reflect some of the biggest challenges facing young people today, including online misogyny. Content has also been added on AI, the prevalence of deepfakes, the characteristics of social media, including fake accounts, and how social media can escalate conflicts.

The guidance is clear that in secondary schools, pupils should learn about the serious risks of viewing online content that promotes violence, including how to safely report this material and how to access support after viewing it.

Recommendation of the report: Finally, the government should work with Ofsted to ensure that the delivery of cross-curricular media literacy teaching is included in the schools inspection framework. (Paragraph 211)

Response: Effective accountability is key to ensuring high school standards for all our children and young people. On 9 September, Ofsted published details of a reformed school inspection system and report cards which, alongside the Department's new school support and intervention arrangements, will drive high and rising standards across the country. The new inspections will be implemented from November. The arrangements focus on the key areas of inclusion, curriculum and teaching, achievement, attendance and behaviour, personal development and well-being, leadership and governance and safeguarding.

Ofsted has published inspection toolkits, which set out the areas of provision that are graded, and what inspectors will look for. The schools toolkit sets clear expectations that schools should ensure pupils understand how to stay safe, and keep others safe, online. This includes pupils being able to recognise online and offline risks to their well-being (including risks related to sharing personal information, viewing harmful content online, criminal and sexual exploitation, sexual and physical abuse, substance misuse, and radicalisation/extremism) and them being made aware of the support available. It also sets out that schools should enable pupils to recognise the dangers of using technology and social media inappropriately. Disadvantaged and vulnerable children are at the heart of reforms, with a focus on 'inclusion' in every inspection. The toolkit is clear that Ofsted expects schools to identify pupils who are at greater risk of harm, including online harm, and take appropriate steps to safeguard them.

Conclusion of the report: At present, teachers lack the skills and confidence to deliver media literacy education in a way that is relevant to their students' experience of media. Relying on younger teachers' knowledge of social media and current trends is insufficient. (Paragraph 218)

Recommendation of the report: Initial teacher training and continuous professional development should be updated to incorporate media literacy, to ensure that teachers feel better equipped to deliver lessons on this topic. The design of a teacher training programme should be informed by previous pilot schemes and should leverage the expertise of subject associations and media literacy organisations. (Paragraph 219)

Recommendation of the report: Greater efforts are needed to make teachers aware of the support that is available from a variety of media and voluntary organisations. The Department for Education should collaborate with media organisations, including the BBC, to develop age-appropriate resources to support the delivery of media literacy education in schools. (Paragraph 220)

Response: Schools can access a range of resources to support media literacy teaching, including from organisations funded by government. For example:

- To support schools to deliver the curriculum, optional, free and adaptable resources from Oak National Academy are available to use via their website. Full curriculum packages will be available by this autumn.
- The National Centre for Computing Education provides teachers with free continuing professional development for teachers and resources to support the teaching of computing, including on topics such as media literacy, digital literacy, and artificial intelligence.
- The ‘Educate Against Hate’ website hosts a range of media literacy resources which seek to help young people evaluate the validity of information. We work with education professionals and civil society groups to create and curate high-quality resources to assist teachers to build pupils' critical thinking skills. The website is regularly updated so that it continues to be a live and relevant source of support.

As with other curriculum subjects, the Department for Education does not advise schools on which resources, external speakers or organisations to use, not least because schools operate in a variety of different contexts and have both the expertise and knowledge that makes them best placed to make these decisions.

Once the Curriculum and Assessment Review has finalised recommendations in Autumn and we know the extent of changes to consider, the Department for Education will decide how to best support teachers and leaders in implementing these changes. This includes identifying opportunities to engage others, such as DSIT, Ofcom and media organisations, to amplify good practice and signpost resources, to ensure that teachers are fully confident to teach the updated curriculum.

In addition, the Department for Education is committed to working closely with Ofcom to support implementation of their Media Literacy Strategy commitment to support teachers through continuing professional development and stronger collaboration with regional partners to share learnings and effective practice.

Conclusion of the report: Media literacy education should not be confined to school settings. Community groups and youth organisations have an important role to play, as do parents. Parents’ involvement is particularly important during the early years phase,

as children are increasingly engaging with media and technology from a very young age. (Paragraph 237)

Conclusion of the report: We heard that parents want to help their children develop media literacy but lack sufficient skills themselves. Schools are a key means of delivering and signposting parental support in this area. Local social infrastructure, such as public libraries and youth services, is also vital and requires continued investment. These settings provide essential opportunities for young people and their families to develop media literacy skills in a more informal context. (Paragraph 238)

Recommendation of the report: In designing media literacy interventions for adults, including through public awareness campaigns and local initiatives, the government should target outreach for parents through schools, libraries and family-focused community settings, such as the new Best Start family hubs. The government should also explore opportunities to amplify and encourage use of existing resources, for example those provided by the BBC or third-sector organisations. (Paragraph 239)

Response: The government agrees that media literacy education must extend beyond formal school settings. Community groups, youth organisations, libraries, and parents all play a vital role in supporting children and adults to navigate the digital world safely and confidently.

Empowering Digital Families

We know from our engagement with over 20,000 young people as part of the National Youth Strategy that online safety and media literacy are key issues for them with a quarter of young people responding that ‘being safe online’ would improve their day-to-day life.

Parents are at the frontline of keeping children safe online, particularly during the early years when digital engagement begins. The government agrees with the Committee’s findings about the value of equipping parents with the skills to reinforce messages and their children’s learning in the classroom from an early age. However, we recognise that many parents lack the confidence or skills to support their children effectively. That’s why the government has funded targeted interventions such as Parent Zone’s Everyday Digital programme, which reached over 63,000 parents and delivered a 45% improvement in understanding what media literacy means. Ipsos research commissioned by DSIT further explores parents’ media literacy needs and will inform future approaches. In addition, the government is exploring the development of a communications campaign to empower online audiences, including parents, to think critically about misleading and polarising content.

We also recognise that while there is an immense volume of online safety information available, many parents remain unaware of relevant resources. We are committed to

helping parents more easily find the guidance and support they need. To support this, we will set up a dedicated online hub which will offer clear, accessible and practical guidance for parents and carers on children and young people's online safety, signposting them to trusted resources for further support.

Schools have a key role to play in sharing information, tools and strategies with parents, to inform them about upcoming curriculum content and provide them with the opportunity to view and discuss materials. Schools are also well placed to support parents' understanding of the evolving technological landscape/opportunities/risks to continue and complement the conversation at home.

The Children's Commissioner for England will produce a new guide for parents on how to support their children to stay safe online soon, and has highlighted that it is important that parents and carers feel more supported to become more confident managing their children's online activities and putting in age-appropriate boundaries – and above all, to talk and keep talking at home about what they see and how to respond.

The Department for Education publishes comprehensive guidance and makes freely available a range of resources on its 'Educate Against Hate' website, to support teachers in protecting children from extremism and radicalisation. Alongside these resources, Educate Against Hate includes a parent-specific content section to support parents to identify and manage concerns of radicalisation and extremism.

The Department for Education also works with education professionals and civil society groups to identify and produce high-quality resources that assist teachers and parents to build children's critical thinking skills and resilience to extremist and harmful ideologies. We are also currently conducting research with a range of parents and experts around online safety and related issues to assess how government might better support parents with these issues, particularly in providing information and advice directly to parents through online information.

The Department for Education provides funding for adult learning through the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) for adults aged 19+ (as well as parents/carers under 19 undertaking a family learning course). The purpose of the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) is to support adult learners to gain skills which will lead them to meaningful and sustained employment or enable them to progress to further learning. Tailored Learning within the ASF can also support wider outcomes such as equipping parents/carers to support their child's learning, as well as improving the essential skills - including the digital skills - of the parents/carers.

Courses designed to support the development of media literacy for adults can be funded through Tailored Learning. This includes via family learning, a subset of Tailored Learning which can support parents to develop their media literacy skills, specifically so they can support their children's learning around media literacy.

Tailored Learning is primarily non-qualification-based provision and is delivered across England through local authority adult education services, FE colleges, and Institutes of Adult Learning. It tends to be run in accessible informal venues, such as libraries, children's centres, schools and community centres.

In addition to the support and guidance from schools, work with their parent communities, the youth sector has several resources to support digital literacy and staying safe online. These include:

- Girlguiding offers the 'Digital Media Literacy Badge', '[Digital Design Badge](#)' and '[Google's Digital Adventure Badge](#)'.
- The Scout Association offers the '[Digital Maker Staged Activity Badge](#)' and '[Digital Citizen Staged Activity Badge](#)'. These badges are centred around digital inclusion and design, working with communities to support the elderly to access IT services, and to think creatively and design their own apps, developing digital literacy skills beyond the classroom.
- The National Youth Agency (NYA) [launched](#) a module on 'media literacy and digital youth work', to enable youth workers to discuss issues surrounding online safety with young people they support.

Digital Confidence in Communities

We endorse the comments on the vital contribution that public libraries can and do play to develop and enhance children and their families' media literacy. They provide a trusted network of accessible locations at the heart of communities, offering opportunities for people to develop core online skills and to gain support with information literacy skills and knowledge, to better manage their online lives.

Public libraries are also well placed to support this work and already provide significant digital support to the public, including free Wi-Fi and internet access, and support from skilled and experienced staff. However, any increased role or demand for or use of public libraries digital services should be carefully monitored to ensure that libraries are well supported and resourced appropriately to deliver.

Public libraries in England are funded by local authorities and in 2023/24 they spent £694 million (net) on library services. The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport announced in February 2025 a further £5.5 million of the Libraries Improvement Fund for 2025-26 to enable library services across England to upgrade not only buildings but also technology, so they are better placed to respond to the changing ways people are using them.

As part of the upcoming Charter Review, the government will also consider the BBC's work in supporting media literacy and its role contributing to a healthy information ecosystem. This will reflect recommendations set out in Ofcom's *Public Service Media*

*Review*³ published in July 2025, highlighting the need for Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs) to invest in media literacy and use their trusted relationship with audiences to build confidence in using digital services and recognising disinformation.

In line with this, the role of trusted local organisations and individuals is a key consideration in developing effective interventions to build media literacy. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) community recovery fund engagement in the aftermath of the Southport tragedy found that low trust in official institutions made it difficult to combat misinformation, aligning with insights that delivery partner trust is key to media literacy success.

The Local Government Association (LGA) has created a guide to dealing with disinformation for Local Authority officials and elected members. MHCLG Community Cohesion Unit is working with the LGA to explore ways in which this guide can be ‘scaled up’ and shared impactfully with Local Authorities. Some Local Authorities, police forces and multi-agency partners have also begun to develop their own best practice. For example, community safety partnerships, such as Online Safety | Dudley Safe & Sound have developed marketing strategies to keep communities informed and inquisitive about harmful narratives and mis- and disinformation.

Essential digital skills for adults

From August 2020 the Department for Education introduced a digital entitlement for adults with no or low digital skills to undertake specified digital qualifications free of charge. Learners can access these qualifications by enrolling through local colleges, adult learning centres, or community providers, with many available both online and in person. There are two qualifications funded through the digital entitlement:

- **Essential Digital Skills qualifications (EDSQs)** are available at entry level and level 1 and are designed to meet the diverse needs of adults with no or low digital skills, reflecting different learning needs, motivations and starting points.
- **Digital Functional Skills qualifications (FSQs)** are also available at entry level and level 1 and have replaced FSQs in Information and Communication Technology. Digital FSQs have standardised content and assessment. The Department for Education published the final subject content for digital FSQs in October 2021.

To help adults navigate digital environments safely and responsibly, the national standards which these qualifications have been developed against include aspects of online safety, such as recognising and avoiding misinformation.

³ Ofcom (2025), Transmission Critical. The future of Public Service Media. Retrieved from <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/public-service-broadcasting/public-service-media-review/transmission-critical-the-future-of-public-service-media.pdf?v=400631>

The Department for Education also funds non-qualification Tailored Learning provision, such as building confidence in essential digital skills, through the Adult Skills Fund.

More information about essential digital skills and other government-funded training opportunities can be found at [Essential Skills | Skills for Careers](https://www.skillsforcareers.education.gov.uk/pages/training-choice/essential-skills)⁴.

⁴ <https://www.skillsforcareers.education.gov.uk/pages/training-choice/essential-skills>