Ofcom

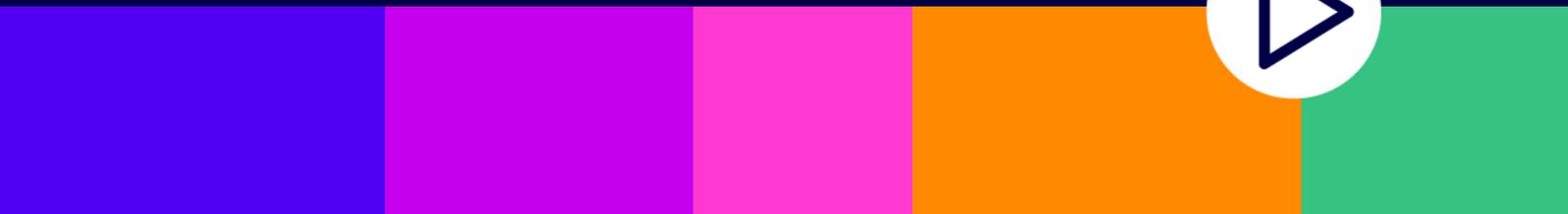# Making Sense of Media Annual Plan

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Making Sense
of Media

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Section

1. Introduction

Our vision is for a UK where people have the media literacy skills and support they need, and where online services and broadcasters play their part to ensure people can navigate content and safely flourish online. We know that Ofcom can't achieve this goal alone. Our first three-year media literacy strategy outlines the way we intend to make media literacy everyone's business.

This document details our progress since we published our last annual plan in April 2023. We are proud of all we have achieved over the last 18 months across a range of disciplines including policy, research, evaluation, commissioning activities for communities and working with platforms.

One significant development over that period was the Online Safety Act receiving royal assent in November 2023 which has clarified and added specificity to Ofcom's media literacy duties. The Act requires us to publish a media literacy strategy at least every three years and an annual statement reporting on our media literacy activities. In response to this, we invested a significant amount of time in developing our three-year media literacy strategy and modified some of our areas of focus. We consulted on the draft strategy in April 2024 receiving 46 written responses to the strategy and hearing directly from 155 stakeholders and from 52 young people at events held online and across the UK. We have now published our final strategy.

The second half of this document outlines our specific plans for Oct 2024 to Sept 2025 as we begin to deliver the strategy. Our role as broadcast media regulator and online safety regulator is set out elsewhere, and so this Making Sense of Media annual plan focuses on Ofcom's further activities as a catalyst and convenor to enable, and sometimes challenge, the broader ecosystem.

We welcome your thoughts and feedback. Please send your observations to: makingsenseofmedia@ofcom.org.uk.

2. Activity report 2023/24

In our 2023 Annual Plan, we detailed the activities we planned to deliver. The table below demonstrates the progress we have made against them. We have completed most of the activities we committed to and have started all of them.

One area where we have not made as much progress as we had hoped is funding for media literacy activities, which reflects the complexity of this issue.

KEY	
Completed	🟩
In progress	🟧
Not started or changed priority	🟥

Table 1: What we delivered

What we said	What we delivered	RAG rating
Engagement		
We will host one in-person event in each UK nation.	We hosted in-person events in Edinburgh, Belfast, London and Cardiff in June 2024.	🟩
We will hold an in-person media literacy summit to share Ofcom's thinking and create space for learning across the media literacy sector.	We held an in-person conference in December 2023, sharing Ofcom's work with approximately 120 attendees. We hosted 21 guest speakers and workshop hosts. In feedback attendees described the events as "excellent and very helpful", "engaging", "well-balanced" and "lovely".	🟩
We will continue to expand our network and use our advisory panel and working groups to encourage coordination and collaboration.	The Making Sense of Media network membership grew from 463 in March 2023 to 615 in August 2024. Our working groups met regularly and contributed to supporting our work on research and evaluation. Our advisory panel met five times and contributed expertise around key decisions.	🟩
Policy		

What we said	What we delivered	RAG rating
We will adopt a 'research, report, roundtable, response' model for our thought leadership outputs, which will include a publication on media literacy and mental health and three discussion papers on the media literacy opportunities and challenges of near future technology.	We have published three discussion papers on media literacy and future technology with a further paper due to be published Autumn 2024. We held a discussion session on our generative AI paper at the MSOM conference 2023. In May 2023 we published a study exploring the role online media literacy can play in supporting people's mental health.	
We will work with our VSP and Online Safety colleagues to fulfil the requirements related to media literacy in those regimes.	We have worked across the VSP and Online Safety regimes to ensure Ofcom is fulfilling the requirements relating to media literacy. We have published a 3 year media literacy strategy, as required by the Online Safety Act.	
Interventions for underserved communities		
We will have a demonstrable impact on over 2,000 people participating in media literacy interventions.	We commissioned 13 organisations to deliver media literacy interventions across the UK, reaching 2,717 participants.	
We will provide evidence of what works in delivering media literacy interventions for older adults, people with learning disabilities, children aged 10 to 14 years and in communities experiencing financial disadvantage.	We published 13 evaluation reports and an overarching report highlighting what works for media literacy.	
We will provide a training programme including course content for at least one workforce supporting children or vulnerable adults.	We commissioned 3 training courses for teachers, social care workers and mental health professionals, training 1,737 people.	
We will generate networks in four areas of the UK currently underserved by media literacy provision, creating a blueprint for how to develop a community-based response to media literacy need.	We piloted a place-based approach to media literacy in Birmingham, Glasgow and Rhondda Cynon Taf and have commissioned local organisations to continue the work over the next three years. We started this work in Northern Ireland in August 2024.	
Evaluate		

What we said	What we delivered	RAG rating
Each of the programmes we commission will be evaluated for impact and learnings from those evaluations will be shared.	We provided evaluation support to 13 organisations commissioned to deliver media literacy activities and published their final evaluation reports. Further evaluation reports from commissioned programmes will be published over the next year.	
We will publish a report identifying cross-cutting themes and challenges across the interventions and a bank of media literacy outcomes.	This report was published in September 2024 alongside the bank of media literacy outcomes.	
We will drive take up of the evaluation toolkit across the media literacy delivery sector and beyond, aiming for 100 organisations to be using it by March 2024.	We promoted the evaluation toolkit via six online workshops with 123 attendees overall (attendance was capped at 25 for each workshop). We also employed digital communications, speaking opportunities in the UK and Europe and and via partner organisations. The toolkit had been downloaded over 300 times by June 2024.	
By spring 2024 at least one platform funder and one other major funder of media literacy projects will have incorporated impact evaluation into their processes.	We continue conversations with funders about the role of impact evaluation in their processes.	
Submissions from external stakeholders for initiatives and research are provided, enabling the media literacy libraries to be updated quarterly.	The media literacy research library and initiative library are updated quarterly.	
Funding		

What we said	What we delivered	RAG rating
We will establish one partnership with key sector funders.	We were not confident this approach would be sufficient so we will continue exploring solutions for sector funding in 2024-25.	
We will publish a review of funders and their appetite to evaluate.	We conducted a thematic analysis of responses given by 22 UK-based media literacy funders, initiatives or experts (27 individual participants) during semi-structured interviews carried out in summer 2023.	
We will engage with funders in adjacent fields to media literacy.	We are in the process of developing relationships with funders.	
Platforms		
We will publish the co-created Media Literacy by Design Principles in autumn 2023 in draft form and seek stakeholder feedback.	Following our work with both internal and external experts, in October 2023 we published a draft set of 12 Best-Practice Principles for Media Literacy by Design as a call for input. Alongside this we published qualitative research on user attitudes towards on-platform interventions. Based on stakeholder feedback, we published the the final version of the Principles in April 2024. Alongside the summary of responses and quantitative research on the efficacy of on-platform interventions – in this case, in-feed prompts. Pinterest, Roblox, The Lego Group, and Google Search, have pledged to adopt the best practice principles.	
Research		

What we said	What we delivered	RAG rating
We will publish and promote a range of research reports covering both our detailed annual trackers and bespoke research on particular aspects of media literacy.	We have published research into the following aspects of media literacy: • Immersive technology, and what the emerging media literacy implications may be for the future. (June 2023) • Attitudes and experiences of those who hold minority beliefs (September 2023) • User attitudes to on-platform interventions (October 2023) • Exploring high media literacy among adults and children . (December 2023) This was followed by a related report focusing on high media literacy among children aged 8-12 (March 2024). In April, we published reports detailing findings of our Adults' and Children and Parents' tracking surveys, as well as the findings from our longitudinal Adults' and Children's media lives research. Following publication, we held an online stakeholder event to promote and discuss the findings.	

3. Media literacy plan 2024/25

Throughout 2024 we developed our three-year media literacy strategy in consultation with stakeholders and young people across the UK. As a result, our planned activities for this year are listed in three sections, ensuring they align with the strategy. This is one way that we will hold ourselves accountable, ensuring that each year we are working towards the goals described in our strategy or highlighting changes to our plan where necessary.

The goals in our media literacy strategy are ambitious but we aim to achieve them by September 2027.

In addition to the planned activities, we have outlined our ways of working. This reflects our recognition that we are dependent on other organisations across commercial, public and third sectors to achieve our goals. Underpinning every planned activity is our intention to make media literacy everyone's business.

Research, Evidence and Evaluation

In our three-year strategy we set out our target outcomes for this area of our work:

- By 2027, there will be better understanding and measurement of media literacy, due to stakeholders using our research evidence for their policy development and activities.

- By 2027, there will be a deeper understanding of 'what works' for the delivery of media literacy interventions in relevant sectors.

Target outputs Oct 2024 – Sept 25	…which feed into our three-year strategy goals
• **Publish research in areas aligned to our policy work:** **- User journeys towards online misogyny** **- Identifying and supporting groups susceptible to mis and disinformation** **- Improving users' understanding of how their personal information is used by online services.** • **Set up a refreshed Research, Evidence and Evaluation Working Group drawing upon input from third sector organisations and academics.**	Continue to use our research to inform policy development and media literacy interventions, and to encourage its use and further analysis by stakeholders.
• **Re-tender our quantitative media literacy tracking surveys with a greater focus on robust samples for under-represented groups.**	Amplify the voices and testimony of a range of groups within society so that our research is useful to as many people and organisations as possible.
• **Support evaluation of our commissioned projects and share their findings via publications and other engagement events such as lunch and learns.** • **Publish and share the findings from our commissioned interventions which were delivered across the UK from 2022 to 2024.** • **Publish and share the findings from our commissioned training courses which were delivered from 2023 to 2024.**	Share our knowledge on 'what works' in media literacy delivery.
• **Run a series of webinars, surgeries and workshops using our evaluation resources including the evaluation toolkit and example outcomes, indicators and measures.**	Support providers of media literacy initiatives to carry out evaluation, leading to a culture where best-practice approaches are developed, shared and used to develop more effective interventions.
• **Create an evaluation framework for our own work.** • **Report on activities set out in annual plan and whether these have been achieved.**	Conduct an impact evaluation of our three-year media literacy strategy and share those learnings in order to model best practice.

Ways of working

Toexpand the breadth and depth of our insight into online and media use in the context of daily life, and support the sector in understanding 'what works' for the delivery of media literacy initiatives, between October 2024 and September 2025, we will:

- Build on our range of robust and innovative methods to provide insights into our priority topics. This will include working with external stakeholders on secondary analysis of our datasets and a renewed focus on sub-group analysis.

- Identify existing surveys and studies outside the media literacy sector that could inform and support selected media literacy tracking measures.

- Align our research with our strategic aims to inform our policy development and media literacy interventions. We will engage with stakeholders including those from the third sector and academia to factor in their priorities for evidence gathering and to understand how best to amplify range of research and evidence available.

- Provide our findings in easy-to-use ways for use by stakeholders both within the media literacy sector and beyond it.

- Explore ways of reaching the wider public with our research findings.

- Continue to work with experts through our new Research, Evidence and Evaluation working group, recognising the inter-relationship between evaluation and research, and the overlap of expertise in these areas.

- Explore ways of amplifying our evaluation resources so they are of most value to the audiences who need them. This might be through our existing networks (including our international contacts) as well as through new audiences identified through a scoping exercise.

- Focus on creating a culture of sharing and openness around evaluation to ensure its benefits are better understood. For example, through evaluation-specific lunch and learn sessions for stakeholders.

- Continue to share "what works" in evaluation with our stakeholders, including results from our commissioned interventions.

Engaging Platforms

In our three-year strategy we set out our target outcome for this area of our work:

- By 2027, online services will provide better media literacy support for their users, more evaluation of the impact of this support, and longer-term funding for initiatives that help provide this support.

Target outputs Oct 2024 – Sept 25	…which feed into our three-year strategy goals
• **Continue to work with platforms to drive further adoption of the Best Practice Principles and monitor / report on whether platforms honour their commitment. By inviting all regulated services to pledge to adopt the Best Practice Principles, we will continue to expand our work to an even broader range of services.** • **Monitor what progress online services make in promoting media literacy.** • **Encourage the development and use of technologies, systems and approaches that provide further context to users about content they encounter.** • **Use our regular reporting mechanisms to update on the progress platforms have made and where we think there is more to be done.** • **Prepare a statement of recommendations for platforms outlining ways regulated services or others might develop, pursue and evaluate media literacy activities and outcomes.**	Build on work prioritising users' media literacy on platform by promoting best practice.
• **Work with those platforms who have pledged to adopt the principles and beyond to promote , focus on monitoring and evaluation, in particular.** • **Build our understanding of what works when it comes to media literacy on-platform so we can encourage and hold platforms to account in relation to effective interventions.**	Ensure that platforms embed evaluation to build understanding of what works to promote media literacy.

Target outputs Oct 2024 – Sept 25	…which feed into our three-year strategy goals
• **Build our understanding of how platforms fund and invest in media literacy as part of informing our expectations for services.** • **Consider how we can use our regulatory levers to encourage platforms to be transparent about the impact their funding of media literacy has. ,**	Work to ensure platforms' funding of media literacy programmes.
• **Analyse how broadcasters support the media literacy skills of their users through the Public Service Media review.** • **Update guidance for public service broadcasters, including the requirement to promote media literacy.**	Review what broadcasters are doing to support the media literacy of audiences to help them mitigate the impact of mis and disinformation.

Ways of working

To advance our work holding platforms to account for providing better media literacy support for their users, more evaluation of the impact of this support, and longer-term funding for initiatives that help provide this support, between October 2024 and September 2025, we will:

- Build our evidence base on potential harms on-platform and understand what users would like to see regulated services doing to support them.

- Make evidence-based recommendations on what more regulated services can be doing to protect their users from a media literacy perspective.

- Ensure cross Ofcom alignment when it comes to policy and engagement related to regulated services to ensure progress and action when it comes to media literacy.

People and partnerships

In our three-year strategy we set out our target outcome for this area of our work:

- By 2027, more people will have access to the skills and support they require to navigate content and safely flourish online, and educators and other priority workforces will be better enabled to deliver media literacy skills.

- By 2027, media literacy will be a greater priority for a broader range of organisations and sectors.

Target outputs Oct 2024 – Sept 25	…which feed into our three-year strategy goals
• **Commission media literacy activities relating to mis and disinformation.** • **Work with experts working across media literacy and online misogyny to develop recommendations for policy and practice.**	Commission targeted interventions in the cohorts where the need is greatest and share best practice with organisations delivering media literacy activities and their funders.
• **Strengthen relationship**s **with education authorities in each nation and build partnerships with relevant education organisations e.g. Multi-Academy Trusts.** • **Review the existing teacher training offer in England and commission training courses.**	Engage with education authorities and schools to encourage and support media literacy education.
• **Commission place-based approaches to media literacy in Glasgow, Birmingham and Rhondda Cynon Taf.** • **Continue to explore options for working in partnership with the digital inclusion sector in Northern Ireland.** • **Join and contribute to national digital inclusion networks.**	Continue to build on the digital inclusion infrastructure, so that those new to technology can start and continue well.
• **Deliver a bespoke engagement plan for the nations that recognises local context and needs in each place, in relation to media literacy.** • **Host an in-person winter conference, addressing key areas of interest across news, mis and disinformation and content of democratic importance.** • **Develop and deliver a strategic engagement plan with a focus on making media literacy everyone's business.**	Forge new relationships and expand our network to make media literacy a priority for a wider range of organisations.
• **Bring together experts to consider the media literacy implications of future and emerging technologies such as AI, on discrete areas of user lives.**	Build on our role as a convenor of media literacy experts to co-create policy and practical recommendations on emerging technologies such as AI.

Ways of working

The challenge of improving the nation's media literacy skills is significant. Ofcom are uniquely placed to work with a broad range of stakeholders who are invested in this work. We will continue to deliver media literacy activities, especially where we are able to meet a need that is not already being addressed and demonstrate what works to improve media literacy. We will work alongside expert and interested organisations to help with sharing best practice and creating opportunities for collaboration. We continue to see our role as a convener and a catalyst and we will use our relationships and with online services and broadcasters to help achieve change.

Between October 2024 and September 2025, we will:

- Take an evidence-based approach, using research from our own research function as well as other organisations and academics in the UK and internationally.

- Prioritise the voices of the people we aim to support and the experts who know them best.

- Establish mutually beneficial relationships with other public sector organisations.

- Encourage stakeholders to take a learning approach, sharing their challenges as well as their successes, by supporting evaluation and modelling this ourselves.

- Support stakeholders in understanding the opportunities arising from the emerging of new and developing technologies.

- Continue to work with experts through our advisory panel, which is due to be refreshed this year.

4. Publications plan 2024/25

Below is a list of publications we expect to produce over the next year.

Table 3: Indicative publications timeline for 2024/25

Publications	Indicative date
Improving users' understanding of how their personal information is used by online services. *Randomised Control Trial to identify which ways of presenting sign-up information are most effective at improving user understanding, to support our work with platforms.*	Autumn 2024
Future technology and media literacy: applications of generative AI *Discussion paper examining the applications of generative AI and how this will impact users including risks and opportunities in the applications of generative AI and how users, platforms and the media literacy sector could respond.*	Autumn 2024
User journeys to online misogyny *Qualitative research to explore the ways in which users become drawn in to online communities that propagate and promote misogyny, the ways in which media literacy shapes action and understanding, and potential media literacy interventions.*	Winter 2024
What works in media literacy CPD *Evaluation report describing the impact and learnings from delivery of three continuing professional development (CPD) courses.*	Spring 2025
Identifying and supporting groups susceptible to mis and disinformation *Mixed methodology project including a survey, literature review and qualitative research, to understand which groups encounter and are impacted by mis and disinformation, and appropriate ways to support these groups.*	Spring 2025
Adults' and Children's Media Literacy Tracker reports and Media Lives reports *Ofcom's annual qualitative and quantitative media literacy tracker publications.*	Spring 2025
Statement of recommendations *Report as part of Ofcom's Online Safety duties outlining ways regulated services or others might develop, pursue and evaluate media literacy activities and outcomes.*	Summer 2025