'PAUSE, THINK, CLICK'

MEDIA LITERACY PROJECT

Evaluation Report – February 2024

mencap
Liverpool and Sefton

Making
sense
of media

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to evaluate Mencap's *'Pause. Think. Click'* media literacy project commissioned by Ofcom. The project ran for 12 months from February 2023 to February 2024 as part of Ofcom's Making Sense of Media programme of work, delivered by Royal Mencap Society (RMS) in partnership with Mencap Liverpool and Sefton (MLS).

We know from the communities that Mencap works with, that age appropriate, effective "online guidance" for adults with a learning disability is severely lacking. Our research indicates that 1.2 million people with a learning disability in England may struggle with information in digital formats.

While digital platforms have the potential to create greater accessibility and opportunity for people with a learning disability (PWLD), they can also further exacerbate the inequalities they already face as they may struggle with comprehension, particularly the complexities of the digital world. Many people with a learning disability have been bullied online or found themselves vulnerable to misinformation, scams and online exploitation.

Project Goals:

1. Our co-created model will sustainably develop critical thinking skills and build independence and resilience amongst people with a learning disability of all capacities and capabilities, enabling them to make informed choices when exploring the online world. Of the 40 people with a learning disability who will participate in our test and learn approach, 85% of these will have:
- Increased ability to identify and respond to harmful content
- Improved awareness of misinformation and disinformation
- Developing resilience to online scams and fraud
- Increased confidence in making well-informed judgements and decisions online

2. Further strengthen and upskill our Digital Champion network so we can continue to extend our work. To do this, we will co-research, co-develop and co-produce a peer-led and peer-reviewed model or 'Thinking Routine' for media literacy.

Activities & outputs achieved:

- Digital Champion with a learning disability recruited at Mencap Liverpool and Sefton
- Two research focus groups reaching 17 people with a learning disability took place
- Three engaging, accessible and educational videos were co-produced
- 9 media literacy sessions were delivered to 83 people with a learning disability across 6 areas of deprivation; Liverpool, Knowsley, Tameside, Nottingham, Birmingham and Islington, through engagement with local Mencap programmes, services and affiliated partners
- Peer-led user testing and refining

- Social media posts created including: a blog written by the Digital Champion, and Tiktok 'teaser' videos to share bitesize snippets of the three co-produced videos.
- Produced written evaluation report and co-produced accessible evaluation video with Digital Champion
- Disseminated learnings with network including presenting key intervention and findings at Liverpool City Region Digital Inclusion Network and sharing resources with Network of affiliated partners. Reached 284 people via social media (including TikTok, X/Twitter and Facebook).

Key impact findings:

1. There was a **clear positive impact** on the participants and their confidence levels regarding media literacy and online safety.

Before the sessions, we asked participants how confident they felt about their media literacy skills and how safe they feel online, i.e., **81% of participants felt confident making decisions to stay safe online.**

These high baseline confidence levels may reflect the fact that our members have access to many resources and expert speakers within the services and online safety is a priority therefore may have already received previous training sessions on this subject area.

It should also be noted that the Dunning-Kruger effect may influence these results, indicating that many participants' confidence in these areas around digital literacy, online safety and resilience may be a projection of their limited exposure to these dangers, resulting in a cognitive bias. Many participants may have felt confident only dealing with the issues they were aware of but were underprepared for the issues they had never experienced.

After the sessions, when asking about confidence levels, participants reported 94%, which **exceeded our initial target of 85%.**

2. We can see this has also had a positive impact on surrounding support network circles as evidenced by our reach being extended through word of mouth across Mencap stakeholders and services. This allowed us to reach 83 participants; **more than twice the number of our initial target of 40,** supporting our mission to further strengthen and upskill our digital champion network, enabling us to continue to extend our work.

Further evidence of this impact is broken down across all outcomes in Participant and Stakeholder findings.

Key delivery findings:

1. Video was the preferred learning medium for delivery
2. Due to fatigue, session time should be reduced to 1 hour as opposed to 90+ minutes
3. A pre-meeting with the groups to manage expectations prior to the sessions is a preferred way forward when planning sessions
4. When utilising Kahoot quizzes with participants clear and unambiguous answers such as 'Yes/No' are the preferred response in comparison to True/False which was proven to confuse some participants and therefore the efficacy of responses.

Dissemination of the many learnings from this project will aid in the project legacy and sustainability.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

This section outlines the project's background, along with why undertaking this work is so vital. We will also explain how it contributes to Ofcom and Mencap's aims and objectives while aligning with our ethos and our inclusive ways of working.

Ofcom – Making Sense of Media

Making Sense of Media is Ofcom's programme of work to help improve the online media literacy skills, knowledge and understanding of UK adults and children. Ofcom do this by sharing their own insights, based on evidence and research, and by galvanising the wider media literacy community to progress and pilot activities and initiatives in support. This work builds on Ofcom's substantial body of research into the UK's media habits, attitudes and critical understanding.

The media literacy needs of people from minority communities, disadvantaged backgrounds and those with protected characteristics such as people with a learning disability are not being effectively met by current media literacy provision, compared with the wider community. To help address this under-provision, Ofcom commissioned 13 organisations to deliver media literacy initiatives targeted to these groups and communities. Four categories of beneficiaries were identified, Mencap's project fits under 'Online media literacy interventions for people with mental health challenges or disabilities.'

Royal Mencap Society (RMS) and Mencap Liverpool & Sefton (MLS)

At Mencap adopting inclusive practices to the way we work through co-production and community led development is at the heart of everything we do. This can be seen from our campaigns and previous projects such as our 'My Community' and 'Let's Get Digital' programmes.

The *Let's Get Digital* programme ran from 2020 to 2022 and allowed Mencap to work with over 100

community organisations and recruit 270 Digital Champions from our community of network partner. We learned about the challenges faced and the most effective approaches to provide support. We learned that peer-led sharing of lived experience is a powerful and impactful tool, instrumental in building confident and resilient digital users. people with a learning disability told us they want to explore the online world independently, and we therefore aimed to develop an effective person-centred approach to media literacy which enables positive risk-taking, reduces fear and anxiety, and promotes inclusive ownership of the digital space. Mencap Liverpool and Sefton, are one of the network partners who took part in *Let's Get Digital*, making this project a fantastic opportunity to build on our partnership and further our media literacy work together.

Liverpool is the 3rd most deprived local authority in the Index of Multiple Deprivation and Poverty (2019). Mencap Liverpool and Sefton works with people with mild/moderate learning disabilities within the local community. Most members of the service can read and write and, increasingly since the pandemic they can also access online. However, service members can struggle with comprehension, particularly the complexities of the digital world.

Our Model

Our model, informed by our shared learnings, was co-produced with people with lived experience. We ensured it was effective and practical by centering this around a 'supported thinking routine' to enable people with a learning disability to move towards a position of 'safer uncertainty' resulting in a programme that was co-researched, co-developed and co-produced as well as a peer-led and peer-reviewed model or 'Thinking Routine' for media literacy.

This model promotes long term sustainable skills such as increased independence and resilience for people with a learning disability and their communities so they can make more informed and safe choices when exploring the online world.

For further information from our Evaluation Framework see Appendix 1.

PROJECT DESIGN & DELIVERY

The project was split into four key milestone areas of activity;
1. Project Research
2. Content Creation
3. Test and Learn
4. Dissemination of Learnings

1. Project Research:

Step 1: We identified a project team and recruited a Digital Champion with a learning disability at Mencap Liverpool and Sefton. This was a first for them as an organisation, as well as a first job for the successful candidate.

Step 2: We co-designed and delivered **two focus groups** with Mencap Liverpool and Sefton reaching **17 people with a learning disability,** both online and face to face. This helped us to understand more about the experiences people with a learning disability have encountered online, their confidence levels, concerns and the topics they would like to learn more about to inform our content creation.

We also gathered feedback from staff members about their observations and the need for the project:

"They [people with a learning disability] are statistically more socially isolated, have fewer friends and because of this are more susceptible to online scams and catfishing. I feel it is really important to educate people on staying safe rather than stop people from using things and this project is giving good and useful advice to our members to stay safe."
~ Anonymous MLS Staff Member No. 1

2. Content Creation:

Using the findings from the research phase we worked with the Digital Champion to co-produce

three videos covering:
• Scamming
• Cyberbullying and Trolls
• Catfishing and Grooming
• Sharing personal information online
• Fake information
• Privacy Settings

The videos were introduced and narrated by our project Digital Champion and Mencap's slogan 'Pause, Think, Click' was interwoven throughout to act as a framework for critical thinking routines.

Canva was used to produce the videos, enabling us to add subtitles and images for accessibility. Alongside the Digital Champion at Mencap Liverpool and Sefton we also had a Lived Experience Advisor at Mencap to support with editing and providing feedback for co-production.

"Co-production was an important part of the entire project and was included in every aspect of design, production and delivery. Focus groups were held with people with a learning disability to establish what the project would entail and a people with a learning disability was recruited as the Digital Champion to coordinate the project with support from RMS staff and MLS staff. The test and learn phase was essential to gather feedback to continually improve the content and over 80 people with a learning disability contributed to this"
~ Claire, RMS Digital Citizens Project Manager

3. Test & Learn:

We delivered **9 sessions** to **83 adults with a learning disability,** exceeding our target reach of 40. We engaged with member groups across England in areas of deprivation denoted by Ofcom to test our project content and learn from the feedback.

Our initial delivery plan was to run 6 sessions across England, however due to word of mouth and positive feedback from these initial sessions we were able to extend our reach to further participants within our network of programmes, services and affiliated partners.

A key success factor is the previous engagement we had with our networks and services/organisations within the areas making them prime candidates for delivery.

Breakdown by area:

Location (area of deprivation)	Service/Organisation	Number of PWLD reached
Birmingham	Mencap Supported Internship Programme	23
Islington	Mencap Supported Internship Programme & Me Time Service	20
Liverpool	Mencap Liverpool and Sefton (Mencap Network Partner)	15
Nottingham	Mencap Me Time Service	11
Knowsley	Knowsley Disability Concern (Stakeholder of Mencap Liverpool and Sefton)	9
Tameside	Mencap Me Time Service	5

The Test & Learn sessions were structured as follows:
- Icebreaker activity & Introduction to the project
- Baseline Survey completed online via tablets
- Kahoot Quiz completed online via tablets
- Each video played with a pause for feedback discussion between each one, asking the following questions from the participants:
  » What did you like about the video?
  » What did you learn from watching the video?
  » What would you change or improve about the video?
- Kahoot Quiz repeated online via tablets
- Endline Survey completed online via tablets

Depending on the cohort, the session duration was between 90 minutes and 150 minutes. Engagement throughout the sessions was excellent, but time constraints and member commitments meant not all participants could complete the session. In total 83 people with a learning disability completed the baseline survey and 67 people with a learning disability completed the endline survey.
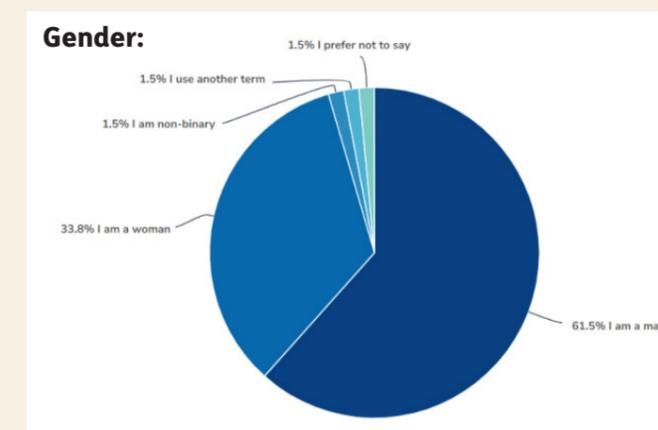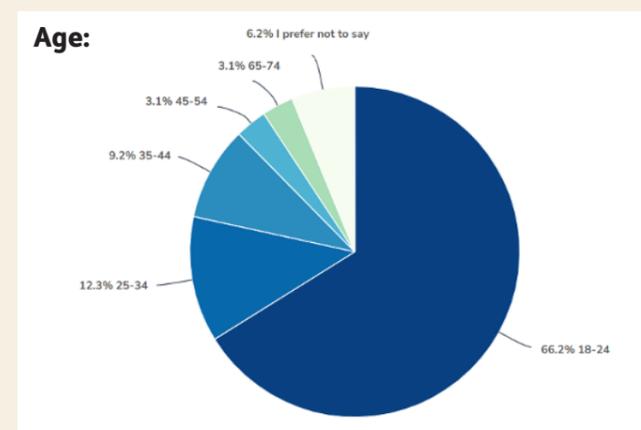
4. Dissemination of Learnings
The final stage of the project was to disseminate the learnings to our wider network.
For Safer Internet Day (6th February 2024) our Digital Champion with a learning disability wrote her first blog, talking about her experiences in the role of developing and delivering this project. This was used as a platform to launch our wider digital content such as the three educational videos we tested in delivery as well as new bite sized videos shared on Mencap Liverpool and Sefton' new TikTok page, set up by our Digital Champion.

In addition, we will share this evaluation report, our resources and key reflections with: our network of stakeholders including Mencap's affiliated Network Partners; industry professionals such as Liverpool City Region's Digital Inclusion Network; fellow delivery partners commissioned by Ofcom whom we engage with over email; and at Learn and Share sessions.

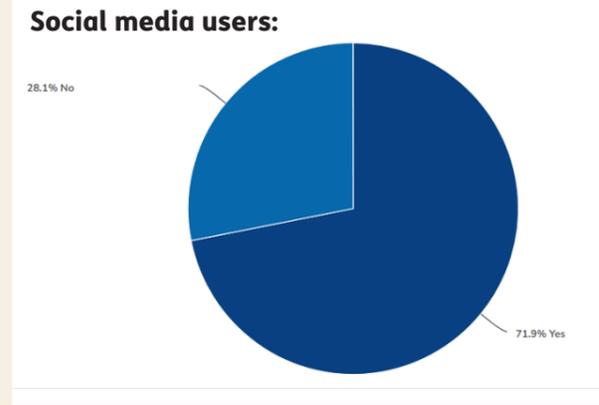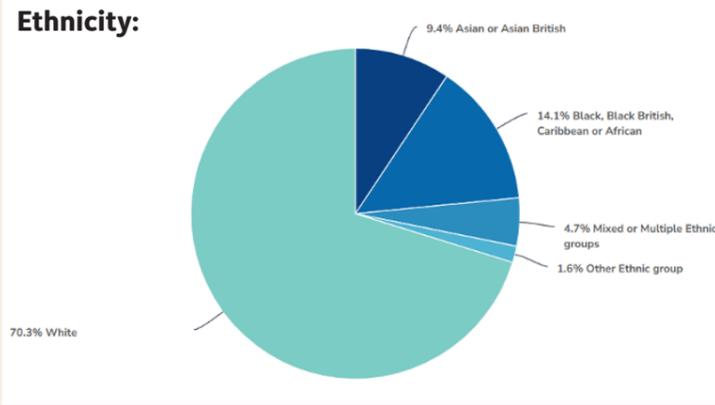# PARTICIPANT AND STAKEHOLDER FINDINGS

Engagement statistics:
Of the 83 participants, all were adults with a learning disability and the majority (66%) were aged between 18-24, while there were fewer over 65s than any other age group. As 5 of the 9 sessions were delivered to Mencap Supported Internship programme whose participants are under 25, these results were expected. Although, some merit can be given to the possibility that the use of internet and technology could be lower in the above 65 age range.

Age:
- 6.2% I prefer not to say
- 3.1% 65-74
- 3.1% 45-54
- 9.2% 35-44
- 12.3% 25-34
- 66.2% 18-24

Gender:
- 1.5% I prefer not to say
- 1.5% I use another term
- 1.5% I am non-binary
- 33.8% I am a woman
- 61.5% I am a man

All genders, including non-binary, were represented in our participant groups during the test and learn sessions. Nearly two thirds (61%) identified as Male.

A large majority of the participants in our Test & Learn sessions identified as white. This correlates with ethnicity representation in the member services, as well as aligning with the local demographics in the areas delivered to:

Local Demographics	White	Black/Black British	Asian/Asian British	Mixed	Other
Liverpool	84%	6%	4%	3%	3%
Birmingham	49%	11%	31%	5%	4%
Tameside	90%	1%	7%	1.5%	0.5%
Nottingham	66%	10%	15%	6%	3%
Islington	62%	13%	10%	8%	7%
Average	70%	8%	13%	5%	3%
Our Delivery Demographics	**70%**	**14%**	**9%**	**5%**	**2%**

Ethnicity:

- 9.4% Asian or Asian British
- 14.1% Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- 4.7% Mixed or Multiple Ethnic groups
- 1.6% Other Ethnic group
- 70.3% White

Social media users:

- 28.1% No
- 71.9% Yes

It is worth noting that the number of people attending the Test & Learn sessions who indicated they are users of social media closely aligns with the data evidenced for age range, with approx. 72% of participants using social media and approx. 78% of participants being between 18 – 34 years of age. This may indicate that social media apps are more popular amongst the under 40 age range for people with a learning disability.

Survey Impact Data:

- 83 people with a learning disability completed Baseline surveys
- 67 people with a learning disability completed Baseline & Endline surveys
- This calculates to a completion rate of 80.7%
- Of the 67 participants who completed both a baseline and endline survey, we can report that their self confidence levels increased by the following:
- **23 percentage point increase in levels of confidence dealing with scams/messages**
- **17 percentage point increase in levels of confidence managing social media privacy settings**

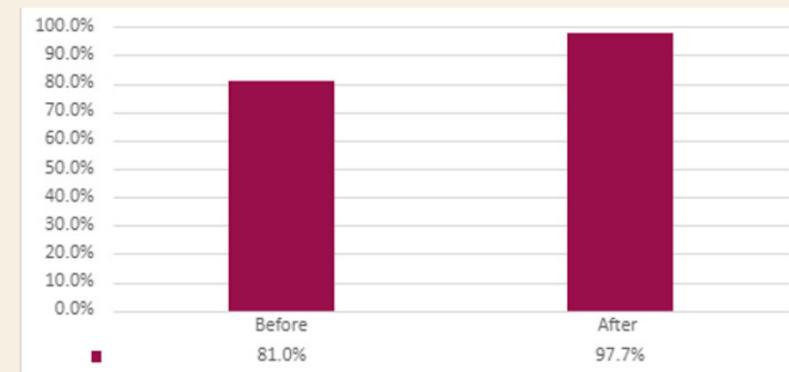- **16 percentage point increase in levels of confidence identifying fake people online**
- **15 percentage point increase in levels of confidence identifying fake news/misinformation**
- **14 percentage point increase in levels of confidence blocking harmful people/content online**
- **14 percentage point increase in levels of confidence identifying scams**
- **12 percentage point increase in levels of confidence staying safe online overall**

Supporting Data

Levels of confidence dealing with scams/messages
– from 62.5% to 85.3%

Before 62.5% | After 85.3%
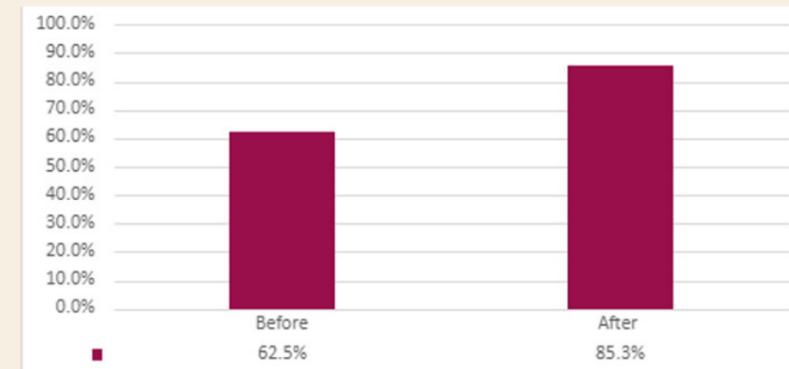
Levels of confidence managing social media privacy settings
– from 81% to 97.7%

Before 81.0% | After 97.7%

Levels of confidence identifying fake people online
– from 62.4% to 78.7%

Before 62.4% | After 78.7%
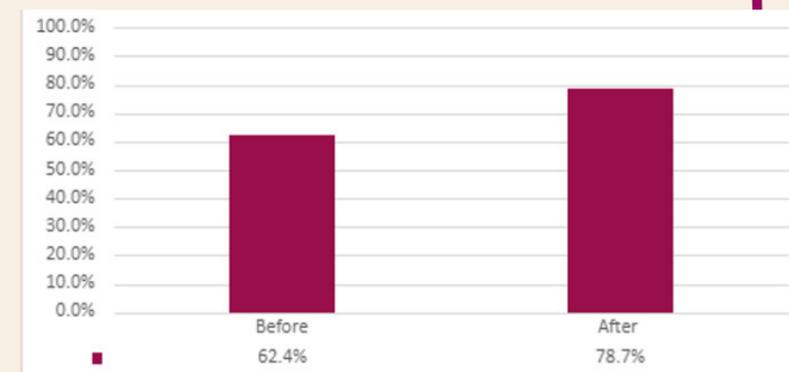
Levels of confidence Identifying fake news/misinformation
– from 73.8% to 88.8%

Before 73.8% | After 88.8%
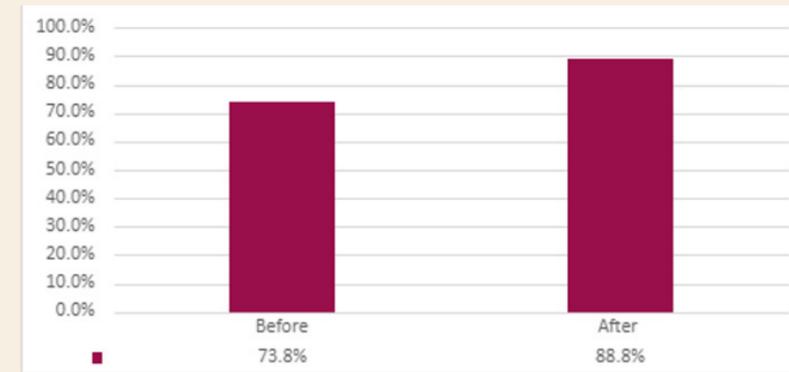
Levels of confidence blocking harmful people/content
- from 81.2% to 95.6%

| | Before 81.2% | After 95.6% |
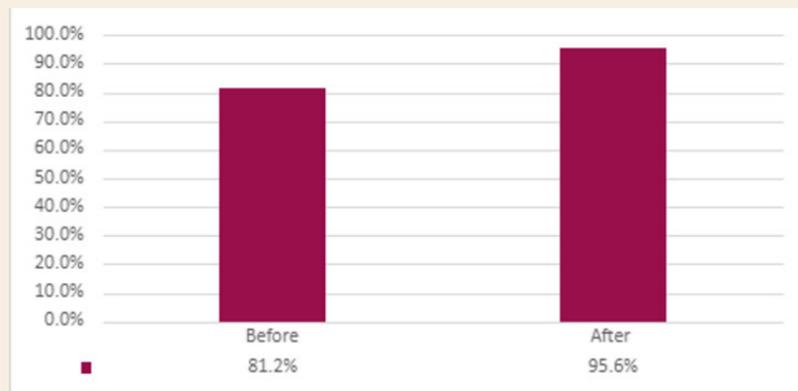
Levels of confidence identifying scams
- from 67.8% to 82%

| | Before 67.8% | After 82.0% |
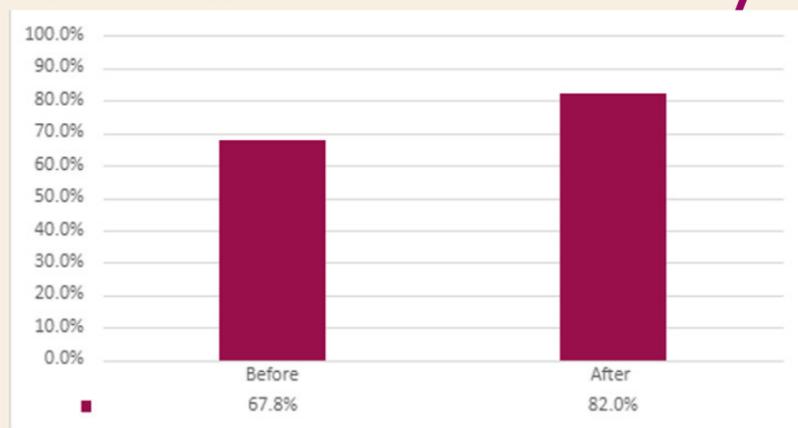
Levels of confidence in staying safe online
- from 81.3% to 93.5%

| | Before 81.3% | After 93.5% |
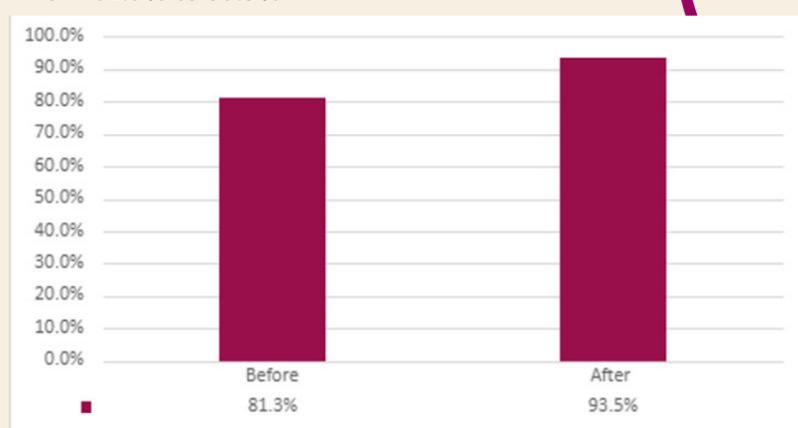
Kahoot quiz Impact Data:

During the first round of Kahoot participants completed a media literacy and online safety quiz at an average correct answer response rate of 72%. In between rounds everyone would view educational video content followed by discussions about staying safe and improving resilience online.

Upon completing the second round of the quiz participants had an average correct answer response rate of **86%, an increase of 14 percentage points from the previous round.**

We also discovered those taking part in the quiz answered their questions faster in the second round than the first round, as evidenced by their scores calculated by the speed of answering said questions and their correctness.

The **average scores increased from 8,900 in the first round to 9,700 in the second round,** indicating an **increase of 9% and demonstrating improved media literacy and online safety knowledge.**

Feedback from support staff

In addition to participant data collection, we conducted interviews with support staff members who observed our sessions and work with the participants on a regular basis to gather their qualitative feedback.

What did you think of the session the people you support took part in?

"All of the tablets were provided and the links for the Kahoot questionnaires were all on the home screen for members to access to make the sessions as simple and accessible as possible. The session was paced well, there were opportunities to ask questions and people enjoyed the Kahoot questionnaires which broke things up. It was pitched at a good level, it needed to be geared towards people who are using media and to help people who were only starting their journey to gain confidence in what to do if they are unsure or uncomfortable."
~ Anonymous MLS Staff Member No. 2

What did you think of the accessibility and engagement of the sessions for the people you support?

"Having accessible videos with audio and closed captions was really useful for teaching purposes. Much better than written booklets or handouts. It will be even better when they go on TikTok as people can pause and replay sections to embed the learning"
~ Anonymous MLS Staff Member No. 1

What changes, if any, have you noticed in the way people you support engage online after their participation?

"People speak to each other and ask if someone thinks if "this message looks suspicious" or does anyone know who this is who is messaging me on Facebook messenger and confident to ask when unsure – people are asking for help from staff and each other to block people on WhatsApp etc. people are also more conscious of when they type something or post something "it is out there forever" and are pausing and thinking, and are less likely to post things that are negative – choosing to not comment or post at all."
~ Anonymous MLS Staff Member No. 2

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE PROJECT

Based on the results from Alchemer and Kahoot, there has been a clear positive impact on the participants' knowledge and confidence levels regarding media literacy and online safety. With that in mind there are some areas that could be improved in future based on our learnings.

1. Session timings

We planned the session to be 90 minutes, which we expected would be sufficient to cover the evaluation materials, digital content, feedback and wrap up and include time for a short break. In many cases this was an adequate amount of time, however the group sizes, confidence and capability levels varied across sites meaning some sessions ran significantly longer.

It was evident that participants in the longer sessions became tired and disengaged, even with an extended break and we felt this fatigue translated into the findings from their endline quiz and surveys.

We recommend to consider splitting the content over multiple hour-long time sessions or smaller bite size chunks in a way that makes it easier to digest and maximizes participant engagement. This, however, presents challenges with coordination of sessions over multiple dates which would need to be considered.

2. Communication issues and conflicting activities

During some of the sessions, there were communication issues between service staff and participants meaning some participants had other engagements and needed to leave the session early. This resulted in the endline surveys and quizzes being incomplete or rushed, which may have skewed some responses.

Some sessions were also impacted due to technical issues brought on by broken speakers, making it difficult for participants to focus on video content used in the sessions.

We recommend having meetings with staff members to prepare them for future training, giving them a clear scope of what to expect and to address the quality of technical equipment to be used in the sessions.

3. Evaluation tools

We found our dual approach to participant evaluation (survey and quiz) to be an effective method to capture impact. Qualitative feedback from support staff was a useful way to support this. We recommend to use this dual approach.

We encountered some issues with True/False statements on the Kahoot quiz as there was clear progress seen in all areas except these types of questions. We recommend future quizzes will only opt for clear Yes/No based questions in place of these.

Attaining follow-up survey responses has proven to be challenging. We believe this is due to facilitators no longer being present with the cohorts at the time of survey completion therefore impacting participant engagement. We recommend for future delivery, sharing plans to issue a follow up survey at the earliest opportunity and gaining a prior commitment from staff as to how and when this will be issued and returned.

4. Additional content ideas

The more digitally confident participants suggested there are more topics they would like to explore further such as understanding digital footprints, further protections from online harms and AI and how it can affect our social lives.

We recommend including a wider scope of content for those people with a learning disability who are more digitally confident.

PROJECT LEGACY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Dissemination of the many learnings from this project will aid in the project legacy and sustainability.

At a Stakeholder level, Mencap will continue to share the learnings and findings with our networks by circulating this evaluation report and presenting at relevant forums. In March 2024, Mencap Liverpool and Sefton will present the project to Liverpool City Region's Digital Inclusion Network, to increase our reach and sustainability.

At a beneficiary level, including people with a learning disability and their support networks, we will share the co-produced videos via our TikTok page. TikTok has 1 billion current monthly active users and is the 4th largest social media platform in the world by the number of monthly active users. Its main audience is adults between 18-24 years of age, and it is sustainable because the videos will remain there as long as TikTok is active. At present TikTok is gaining new users faster than any social media platform in the world. People with a learning disability will be able to continue to access our collection of videos via TikTok. Organisations who follow our TikTok page will also be able to reshare these videos to their own pages. This will increase our reach and further enhance the sustainability of the project. This will improve our opportunities to collaborate with other organisations that share our ethos in the future.

Additionally, we have secured a small amount of funding from The Charles & Edna Broadhurst Charitable Trust to extend the employment contract of our Digital Champion for three additional months. During this period, we will create and share one new video per month on media literacy and online safety via our TikTok channel.

Through the combined efforts of Royal Mencap Society and Mencap Liverpool & Sefton we have been able to identify the primary concerns people with a learning disability have regarding media literacy and online safety skills in a co-produced and inclusive manner.

We have created a successful series of accessible educational videos through our digital sessions to develop critical thinking skills for our participants and ensure they are prepared to make informed choices online and support their peers. This content is beneficial not only to people with a learning disability, but also for those whom English is not a first language as well as young people.

This model has proven to successfully strengthen and upskill our Digital Champion network, allowing Mencap to continuously extend our reach and our teachings.

With sincere thanks to Ofcom for commissioning this important project.

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS & EVALUATION

Evaluation Framework

We adopted methodologies based on our Evaluation Framework by developing effective person-centred approaches to media literacy which enable positive risk-taking, reduce fear and anxiety, and promote inclusive ownership of the digital space.

The long-term goals of this are to empower people with a learning disability to become more resilient and independent in their decision making, encouraging positive thinking and the ability to weigh out the implications of risk-vs-reward based systems in online spaces via digitally inclusive processes.

The full breakdown of our Evaluation Framework can be found in appendix 1.

Evaluation Approach

We opted for a dual approach to the evaluation, consisting of a survey to collect self-reported confidence levels and an interactive quiz using Kahoot to assess knowledge and understanding. Both the survey and quiz were completed before and after the training session, allowing us to compare baseline and endline results. Participants were provided with tablets with the survey and quiz pre-loaded on the home screen for ease.

Survey

The survey was created on the platform Alchemer which allowed us to incorporate various user accessibility functions to make it accessible, including use of Photosymbols, audio-visual based word defining as well as ability for us to store, export and analyse the data.

At the start of the survey there was a brief overview of the project, information on data storage, consent, and our standardised demographic questions. 3 months after the training sessions, a revised version of the survey was sent out again to track longer term impact.

We issued a follow up survey to capture participants' confidence levels 3 months after the intervention, however only received 6 responses (a rate of 14%). Though much lower than desired, this response rate was expected given we do not engage with the participants regularly and staff have conflicting priorities.

Strengths of this approach:
- A digital approach to evaluation was highly relevant given the themes of the content, moving away from traditional paper-based approaches
- Good way to gauge who we are engaging with and the skill levels they identify with
- Allowed us to assess confidence levels and which areas needed to be revisited
- Opportunity for all participants to anonymously give feedback in an impartial manner

Weaknesses of this approach:
- 16 out of 83 participants were unable to complete the endline surveys due to scheduling conflicts
- Gauging long-term survey responses proved difficult as original facilitators could not be present/aid with engagement due to staffing issues or prior engagements
- This feedback can be more subjective than objective as it is based on self-perception as opposed to objective testing
- In baseline surveys one's self-perceived confidence levels may have been skewed due to cognitive bias from the Dunning-Kruger effect.
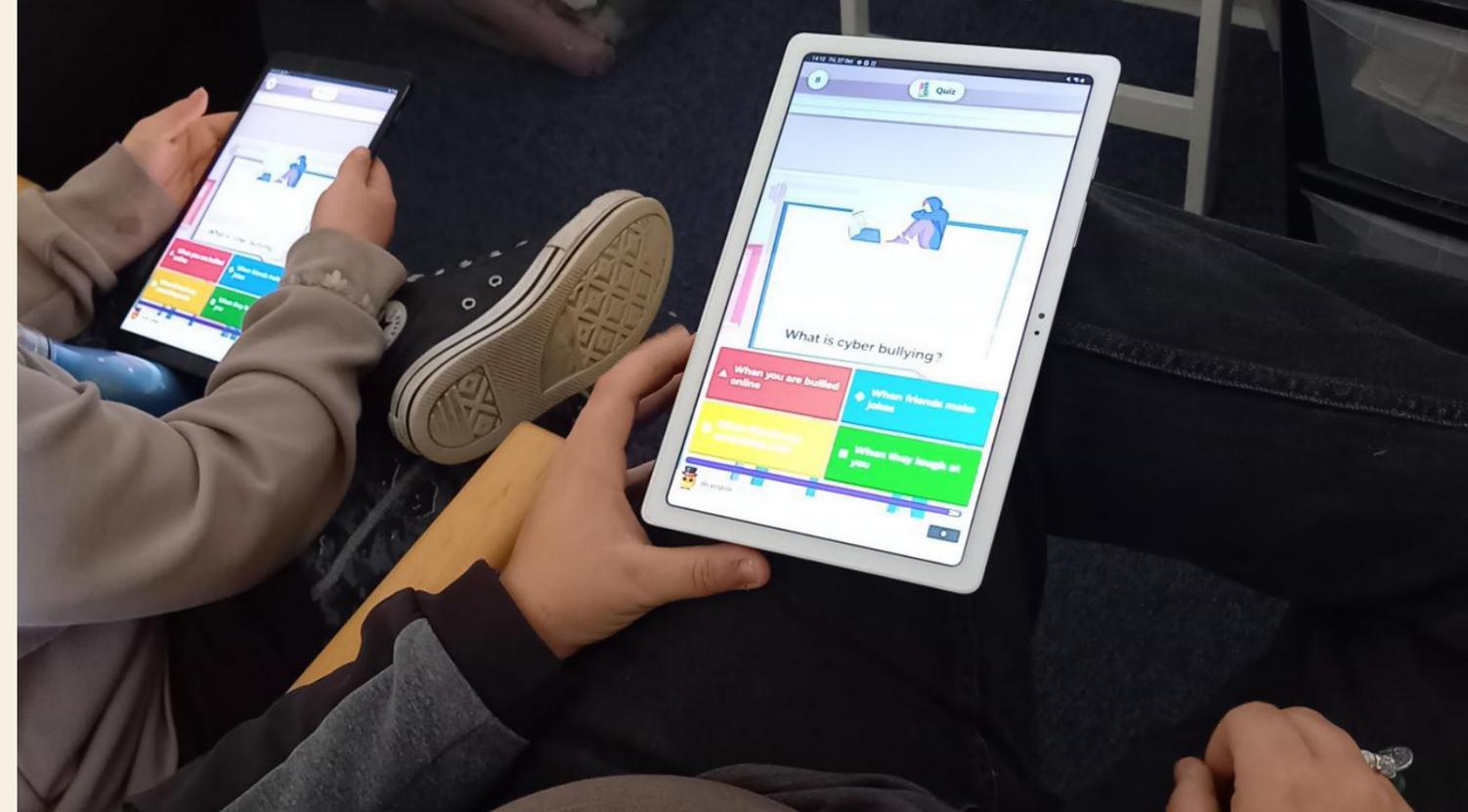
Quiz

After the survey completion, participants were guided to follow a link to Kahoot to take part in an interactive quiz with questions about media literacy content covered in our session. This was a useful way to indicate their knowledge and understanding pre and post session alongside the survey.

Strengths of this approach:
- While video content was preferred, participants from our focus groups also stated that they enjoyed participatory activities such as this
- This proved to be an engaging approach to data collection through gamification, people appeared to enjoy taking part
- We were able to adopt a Test & Learn approach to the design process of the Kahoot games co-produced by colleagues with a learning disability
- All participants were able to take part as we were able to supply them with our own smart tablets to use for each session
- This was a complimentary method to measure everyone's knowledge alongside perceived confidence measured via surveys

Weaknesses of this approach:
- With a Test & Learn approach we also had some Trial & Error, meaning we were able to address any design issues for later sessions at the expense of some confusion in earlier sessions
- Some services we visited did not have the best technical equipment to run the Kahoot quiz which affected some of our results - some venues had issues such as dysfunctional speaker systems and poor projection screens.
- The high number of smart tablets each required additional set-up time which proved difficult in locations with poor Wi-Fi signals and not the most cost or time effective option if looking to scale this work.

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