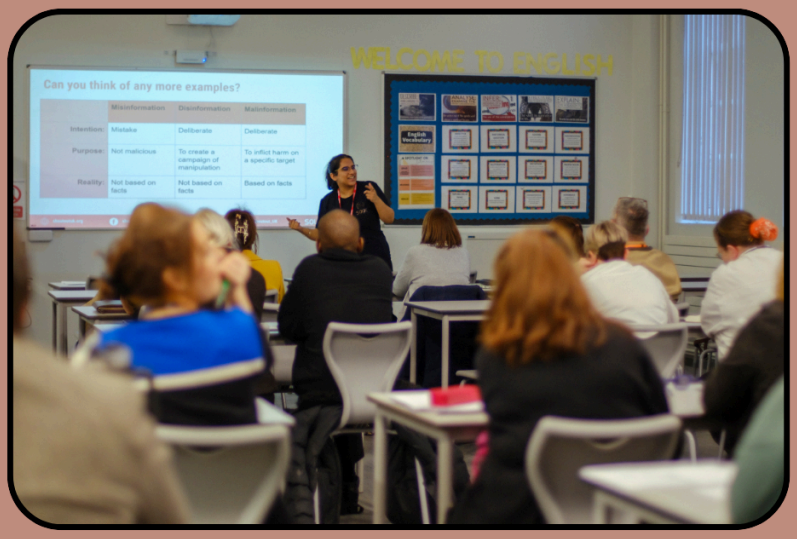
September 2024

OFCOM - EVALUATION REPORT:

MEDIA LITERACY TRAINING FOR PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN

SOUK

SHOUT OUT UK



Ofcom

Making communications work for everyone

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1. Executive Summary

Introduction

Ofcom have identified a gap in Continuing Professional Development related to media literacy for professionals supporting children and young people. To mitigate this gap, Shout Out UK (SOUK) was commissioned by Ofcom in September 2023 to deliver a mass-scale Train-the-Trainer delivery programme targeted at a minimum of 500 UK teachers and education professionals who work with children across the UK.

The ensuing document serves as SOUK's evaluation report for this project, which was completed in July 2024.

Description

SOUK's Train-the-Trainer programme consisted of three separate Media Literacy sessions that built on each other, each with their own Media Literacy focus, grounded in the EU Digital Competencies (DigiComp) Framework.

- **Session 1** (1.5h)[1]: Identifying types of harmful or false online content (mis / dis / malinformation), using debunking and prebunking, and demonstrating methods to protect young people from online harms.
- **Session 2** (1.5h): Identifying online threat types, fostering a culture of fact checking, using other initiatives and resources to uphold active citizenship and self-empowerment.
- **Session 3** (1h) (Optional): Giving educators the opportunity to co-create a plan of how they would integrate their new media literacy know-how into next year's educational plan, while demonstrating and showing them a range of resources.

The above sessions were grounded in the following Digital Competencies:

- DigiComp (1) Information and Data Literacy
- DigiComp (2) Communication and Collaboration
- DigiComp (4) Safety

Key Findings

Through this project, SOUK has engaged a total of 1,054 professionals who work with children, exceeding the original target of 500 professionals. To better reach communities with the greatest need for media literacy, SOUK initially targeted areas experiencing deprivation and then expanded recruitment efforts across the UK. As part of this project, SOUK conducted an evaluation to inform Ofcom and the wider media literacy sector, with the goal of sharing lessons learnt to benefit future projects of this type.

[1] Originally the plan was to have 2 hours for each session but this was changed to 1.5 hours when it was found to fit better with schools needs and timetabling schedules.

Headline findings:

- DigiComp (1) Information and Data Literacy
    - 99% of participants finished the programme with an understanding of the key media literacy terminology mis, dis, and malinformation.
- DigiComp (2) Communication and Collaboration
    - 96% of participants finished the training feeling confident in their ability to explain a young person's radicalisation process.
- DigiComp (4) Safety
    - 96% of participants also agreed that they could identify grooming and recruitment techniques used by extremist groups after taking part in the sessions.

Lessons Learned

What worked well

- Teaching of core media literacy vocabulary and 'darker' online topics
- Demonstrating and practising difficult conversations
- Being highly flexible and adaptable to diverse audiences of educational practitioners
- Targeting teachers likely has a bigger cumulative effect than direct student sessions
- Using caution when discussing potentially negative issues at their schools with teachers

Challenges

- Balancing the varying levels of participants' assumed knowledge
- Improving recruitment in a challenging environment with busy schools
- Survey collection response rates

Conclusions & Ideas for Action

Key Conclusion 1: *Improving the format of takeaway resources and using more real life case studies*

Key Conclusion 2: *Delivering to highly diverse educational audiences requires adaptability*

Key Conclusion 3: *Providing parents with these sessions or an altered parent-friendly format*

2. Background

2.1 Organisation Background

Shout Out UK (SOUK) is a social enterprise dedicated to protecting and amplifying democracy by ensuring all citizens understand how their government functions through political literacy, are inoculated from disinformation and misinformation through media literacy and are given a chance to have a say in how their country is run through our own youth voice platform and various programmes. Since 2015, SOUK's has trained 40,000+ citizens with the ability to effectively identify and challenge misinformation, upskill beneficiaries with critical thinking skills and help communities improve their resilience to malevolent actors spreading false narratives which sow division and extremism. In pursuit of this objective, we have delivered media literacy training in over 20 local councils, 33 London Boroughs, and 4+ countries.

2.2 Project background

In 2021, the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) recognised that "the national curriculum does not include media literacy."[2] Nevertheless, teachers strongly emphasised the importance of media literacy as a crucial tool to protect children from online dangers.[3] When asked whether media literacy should be integrated as a fundamental component of the national curriculum, an overwhelming 90% of teachers responded affirmatively, underscoring the evident need for this type of education.[4]

Teacher training and confidence remain key hurdles that must be overcome. Equipping teachers with the knowledge and resources to navigate the digital landscape empowers them to foster critical thinking skills in their students. This, in turn, strengthens children's ability to identify online manipulation, navigate social media pressures, and become responsible digital citizens. In 2023, UNESCO highlighted how a well-trained teacher can create an engaging learning environment that encourages students to question, analyse, and evaluate information critically.[5] This directly fosters critical thinking skills crucial for navigating today's complex digital landscape.

To support the mitigation of this existing gap in Continuing Professional Development initiatives, SOUK obtained funding from Ofcom to deliver an educational programme targeted at education and youth professionals around the UK. The aim of this programme was to improve this target group's media literacy levels, to provide them with the skills and confidence needed to then cascade this knowledge to young people for years to come.

SOUK's Train-the-Trainer programme consisted of 3 cumulative sessions. Participants were required to attend at least 2 sessions, and encouraged to attend the third. Sessions were developed to empower participants with enhanced media literacy levels and a nuanced understanding of online harm leading to radicalisation, aligning with the EU Digital Competence (DigiComp) Areas (1) Information and data literacy, (2) Communication and collaboration, and (4) Safety. Digital Competence refers to "the

[2] DCMS 'Online Media Literacy Strategy', 2021.
[3] APPG on Media Literacy: Research into the current media literacy landscape in England pg.22
[4] APPG on Media Literacy: Research into the current media literacy landscape in England pg.15
[5] 'Technology in education: A TOOL ON WHOSE TERMS?'

confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society."[6] We adapted the content of our existing training programme for professionals to ensure that our sessions included effective and appropriate media literacy training for targeted professionals, grounded in the EU DigiComp areas mentioned above. The specific outcomes aligned with these DigiComp areas are outlined below.

DigiComp (1): Information and Data Literacy

- **Outcome 1:** Youth professionals demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate information encountered online, including identifying potential biases, mis/disinformation, and echo chambers
- **Outcome 2:** Youth professionals are knowledgeable about available tools and resources for educating young people, as well as seeking support for online safety concerns.

DigiComp (2): Communication and Collaboration

- **Outcome 3:** Youth professionals confidently facilitate discussions and activities that promote critical thinking and reflection on media messages and narratives, relevant to their context.
- **Outcome 4:** Youth professionals effectively collaborate with colleagues, students, and other stakeholders to develop, implement, and assess media literacy education strategies.

DigiComp (4): Safety

- **Outcome 5:** Youth professionals can identify potential online risks, threats, and harmful content, particularly those associated with media literacy and extremism.
- **Outcome 6:** Youth professionals proactively promote responsible and ethical online behaviour, digital citizenship, and positive online interactions.

Lesson 1: Media Literacy and its core concepts: (DigComp Competences: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3)

The initial session focused on establishing a foundational understanding of Media Literacy within the context of EU Digi Comp 1. Participants were guided through core Media Literacy concepts, enabling them to differentiate between factual information and fabricated content, identify reliable sources, and distinguish between the various forms of misinformation.

Through interactive exercises and discussions, educators were equipped with the skills to debunk online conspiracy theories, recognise instances of mis/dis/malinformation, and safeguard young people from potential online harms. The session fostered a deeper understanding of the digital landscape and provided a framework for educators to enhance their practices, effectively addressing the challenges posed by the digital age.

Using DigComp 1 as a springboard for this session, we interwove the basics of media literacy in order to foster a more nuanced understanding of how media literacy, technology and extremism can intersect. We achieved this by defining Media Literacy and its significance in today's digital environment, understanding the distinctions between mis/dis/malinformation, recognising the types of online harm

[6] Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Life- long Learning, 2018.

young people may encounter, identifying the factors that contribute to vulnerability and radicalisation, and exploring strategies with participants to safeguard young people online.

Lesson 2: Digital Empowerment and Responsible Citizenship (DigComp 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.6)

Lesson 2 aimed to empower educators with the knowledge and skills to navigate the evolving digital landscape responsibly and actively engage in society. Participants delved into the realms of digital empowerment and responsible citizenship, exploring how to utilise public and private sector digital services effectively.

The session emphasised the potential of digital technologies for self-empowerment and participatory citizenship, encouraging educators to harness these tools for personal and societal growth. Strategies for responsible information sharing were also discussed, ensuring that participants could navigate the online world ethically and safely.

In addition, the session addressed current successes in online safety initiatives, providing insights into effective strategies and practices. Participants gained valuable knowledge on prebunking and debunking techniques, empowering them to counter misinformation proactively. Key emerging trends in the media literacy landscape were also explored, ensuring that educators remained informed and adaptable in the face of evolving digital challenges.

This session aimed to equip educators to confidently articulate methods for using digital services for self-empowerment and societal participation. They would have developed strategies for responsible information sharing and fostered a strong understanding of the roles of digital citizenship and empowerment. Moreover, they would gain practical insights into supporting victims of digital harm, preparing them to create a safer and more inclusive online environment for their students.

Through this exploration of DigComp areas 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.6, the session provided a holistic understanding of how digital tools can be leveraged for active citizenship and self-empowerment, ultimately fostering a generation of digitally literate and responsible individuals.

Lesson 3: (DigComp 4.1, and 4.3) (Optional add on)

This session aimed to empower educators to take their understanding of media literacy and online safety, gained in sessions 1 and 2, and translate it into concrete plans for their classrooms or educational settings. We began by revisiting the key media literacy terminology introduced in the previous sessions, ensuring a shared understanding of the concepts.

Next, we facilitated a reflective exercise on their educational institutions strengths and weaknesses, guiding participants to critically assess their current approach to media literacy education. This hopefully paves the way for focused improvement.

To equip participants with the tools and resources needed to effectively integrate media literacy into their diverse educational contexts, we presented a comprehensive overview of online resources available. This included exploring various platforms, tools, and initiatives designed to enhance media literacy and online safety. By engaging with the presented resources, participants gained valuable

insights and identified specific tools that resonated with their individual needs and educational contexts. This personalised approach empowered them to develop tailored plans for integrating media literacy into their unique settings.

Finally, the session deepened their prior knowledge of DigComp 4.1 and 4.3, highlighting the importance of protecting devices and digital content, understanding risks and threats in digital environments, and adopting safety and security measures while prioritising reliability and privacy.

2.3 Project progress

Recruitment:

To deliver on our commitment of reaching a minimum of 500 practitioners – and our goal to reach and provide training opportunities for those who face barriers to employment and/or who are located in deprived areas – a school directory was created comprising all the secondary schools across England and Wales that scored 1 on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), ensuring that they were prioritised in recruitment efforts. All schools in this directory were contacted with the training on multiple occasions to ensure that our programme could have a wide impact in the communities that need it most.

Apart from the schools that ranked highest in terms of deprivation, our outreach extended to all secondary schools, special educational needs schools, and further education institutions in the outlined areas of the funding application, as well as areas where we had pre-existing contacts. This includes all

boroughs in London, Leicestershire, Blackpool, Manchester, West Sussex, Surrey, Kent, Portsmouth, Bristol, Sheffield, Leeds, Rotherham, Denbighshire and Conwy.

As well as sending direct emails to key contacts, we continued to communicate the opportunity for free training through other digital communications methods. This included using our monthly newsletter and social media channels to promote the programme and encourage people to sign up. However, we found that this was less effective than targeting key staff members within schools.

Tailoring of content:

Since the target audience of 'Professionals who work with children and young people' can have many different contexts, it was essential to tailor our lesson content to the needs of each group and what would be most helpful and impactful for their future practice. To embed this into the running of our sessions, we ensured that a call/email exchange was carried out with each institution to get a better understanding of their particular context, needs and what they were looking to get out of the sessions. This element of co-design ensures that the groups we engage with take something meaningful from the sessions.

To further tailor the content to the needs of the young people they work with, we asked attendees for feedback at the end of the first session, including any remaining questions and topics they'd like addressed in the following session. We provided participants with diverse goals and examples for the technique-based prebunking demonstrations and exercises modelling difficult conversations with students, ensuring they could select those most relevant and comfortable for their needs.

Session 3's objective was to showcase the diverse array of educational resources available to practitioners, so they could use our examples or research issues independently. The accompanying slides and resource advice were carefully crafted to cater to the varying needs within each class while ensuring the omission of irrelevant materials on the day. Furthermore, emphasis was placed upon addressing the group's specific requirements through live demonstrations of select resources, lesson plans, and teaching methods.

Delivery

From December 2023 to July 2024 we delivered Sessions 1 and 2 to 1,026 Education and Youth Professionals, and Session 3 to 28 participants.

We delivered Sessions 1 and 2 in the following institutions:

- Worsley College, Salford (Further Education Institution)
- Arundel Church of England School, Arundel (Primary School)
- Francis Crick Institute, Camden (Teacher Training across various schools)
- Digital Practice Conference, East Sussex (Social Workers)
- Cumberland Lodge, Windsor (Youth Workers Training across various schools and settings)
- Grwp Llandrillo Menai, North Wales (College group)
- City of Bristol College, Bristol (College group)

We delivered Session 1, 2, and 3 in:

- The Park College, Southwark (SEN Further Education Institution)
- Hawkswood Group, Waltham Forest (PRU)

All institutions we worked with requested in-person workshops, except the two college groups: Grwp Llandrillo Menai and City of Bristol College. Since both of these institutions have staff cohorts of 1,000+ it was logistically preferable for these to take place online, and this was at the request of the institutions. Originally, we had planned to run Session 3 online so that as many participants as possible could join. However, we found that only the smaller institutions could engage in Session 3 due to their more flexible nature in scheduling. We therefore offered these two institutions in-person sessions if they preferred, which both of them did.

3. Evaluation Aims and Scope

3.1 How data was collected

To evaluate the impact of our programme on practitioners, and the effectiveness of our deliveries in achieving the overall programme objectives, our monitoring and evaluation efforts consisted of:

- (1) Pre and post-programme surveys:

We created a set of bespoke pre and post programme surveys. Participants were asked to complete these questionnaires both before and after their participation in the sessions. Consisting of a 'distance-travelled methodology' this evaluation format allowed us to compare participant responses before the sessions to their responses to the same questions after the sessions. To measure our programme's ability to achieve our project objectives, we asked participants to provide responses to the same set of statements both before and after their participation in our sessions. Using Likert-scale questions consisting of a 5 answer scale (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree) we evaluated our respondents' level of agreement with a set of statements. These types of questions are useful to measure the intensity of a respondent's feelings towards a topic, helping us then identify areas for improvement and adapt our programmes based on participant needs and learning experiences. With this data, we are able to capture the broader impact of our programme, including improvements or areas for growth.

The questionnaires contained a range of questions related to the topics covered, as well as demographic questions, and quality control questions. Furthermore, we made sure to include space for qualitative feedback in the post-programme surveys, in order to gather further insight from the participants that cannot be quantified.

For Session 3, we decided to use post-programme reflective surveys as opposed to pre and post surveys, as the session length was shorter than the first 2 sessions.

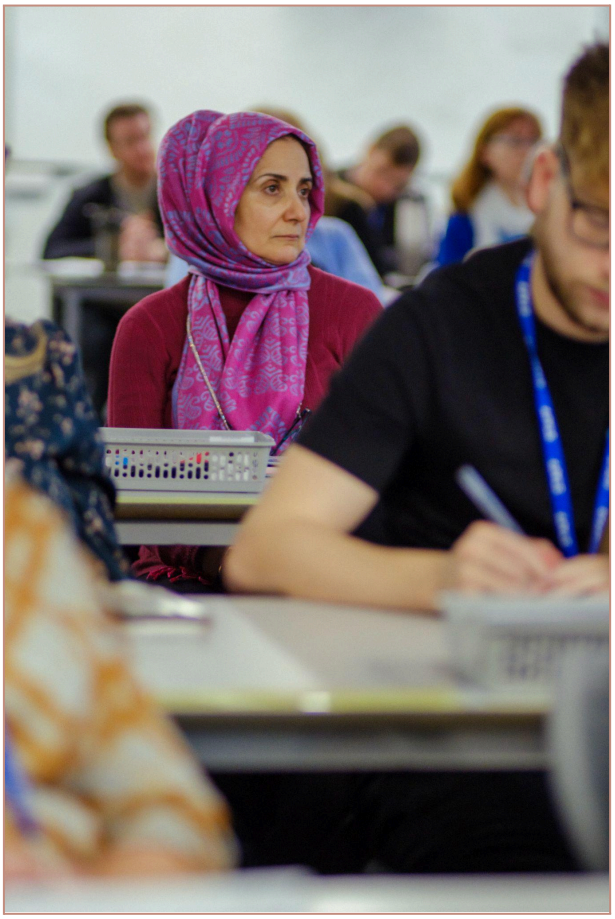
- (2) Qualitative Interviews:

To bolster the quantitative analysis of our project, we conducted 2 post-programme qualitative interviews with participants. Our interviews took place virtually and lasted up to 45 minutes. Interviews were semi-structured, and we asked participants a range of both impact and process evaluation questions. Despite offering this feedback opportunity to all participants of Session 1 and 2, unfortunately there was not much uptake in participation, with only 2 participants agreeing to be interviewed. However, the insights gained from this qualitative data allows us a better understanding of the impact of this programme on the participants' practice several months after they took part.

- (3) Quality Control survey:

Thirdly, we created a quality control questionnaire which we disseminated to all participants who completed at least 2 of our sessions. These were sent to participants between 1-3 months after their

participation in Session 2, helping us establish the medium-term impact of our programme on beneficiaries. The questionnaire contained a range of questions related to the topics covered, as well as quality control questions. Furthermore, we made sure to include space for qualitative feedback to gather further insight from the participants that cannot be quantified.



3.2 Limitations

Response rate:

As with any monitoring & evaluation efforts, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. In our case, one limitation is that the survey sample, whilst generally positive, could be improved.

For Session 1 we received: 195 responses to the pre-programme survey; 212 responses to the post-programme survey.

For Session 2 we received: 169 responses to the pre-programme survey; 179 responses to the post-programme survey.

For Session 3 we received: 19 responses to the post-programme survey.

For the Quality Control Questionnaire we received 8 responses to the survey.

We found a significant difference between the response rate between the in-person sessions and those that were carried out online. This clear difference suggests that perhaps in-person sessions are preferable for data collection purposes, however, these sessions will often be for smaller cohorts of staff. Unfortunately, despite reminders and follow-ups the online groups were far less likely to engage with data collection, suggesting that it is worth considering incentives for people to complete the survey in order to gather larger data sets.

Biases:

Additionally, the self-reported nature of survey data introduces the possibility of response bias. Participants may be inclined to provide socially desirable answers or may unintentionally misrepresent their experiences. While efforts were made to ensure anonymity and encourage honest feedback, the potential for response bias cannot be completely eliminated.

Moreover, it is crucial to recognise the potential for selection bias in our data. The participants who chose to complete the surveys may not be entirely representative of the entire cohort of attendees. Those who were more engaged or had stronger opinions about the programme may have been more likely to respond, potentially skewing the results. While we strive to mitigate this bias through reminders and emphasising the importance of participation, it remains an inherent limitation of self-selected survey data.

Dunning-Kruger Effect:

One of the interesting results of the survey was the surprisingly high baseline of self-reported media literacy skills that we found in the surveys. With data collection that relies on the self-assessment of skills, the Dunning-Kruger Effect could potentially lead to inflated self-assessments of skills and knowledge prior to the intervention. This cognitive bias, where individuals with low competence overestimate their abilities, can manifest in participants rating their baseline proficiency higher than it truly is. Consequently, this might create the illusion of limited progress or even regression after the intervention, as the actual learning gains are masked by the initial overestimation.

In essence, the Dunning-Kruger Effect can distort the baseline data, making it challenging to accurately measure the true impact of the programme using a distance-travelled approach. Participants who are unaware of their knowledge gaps might perceive themselves as already proficient, hindering their ability to recognise and appreciate the value of the training provided. This underscores the importance of employing multiple assessment methods and considering other factors beyond self-reported data to comprehensively evaluate programme effectiveness.

4. Findings

4.1 Participant Demographic Information

Answer Choices	Responses
Male	25%
Female	74%

Other (Preferred description)	**1%**

The above statistics present the gender balance of programme participants. These figures reveal a cohort heavily weighted towards female participants.

After asking our participants to indicate their gender, we subsequently asked them to provide us with their occupation, helping us evaluate the effectiveness of our recruitment efforts in targeting educational and youth professionals.

The top 5 responses to the occupation question are reflected below:

Session 1 Job Titles	Percentage of Respondents
Teacher	11%
Social Worker	11%
Lecturer	8%
Early Help Key Worker	7%
Student	6%

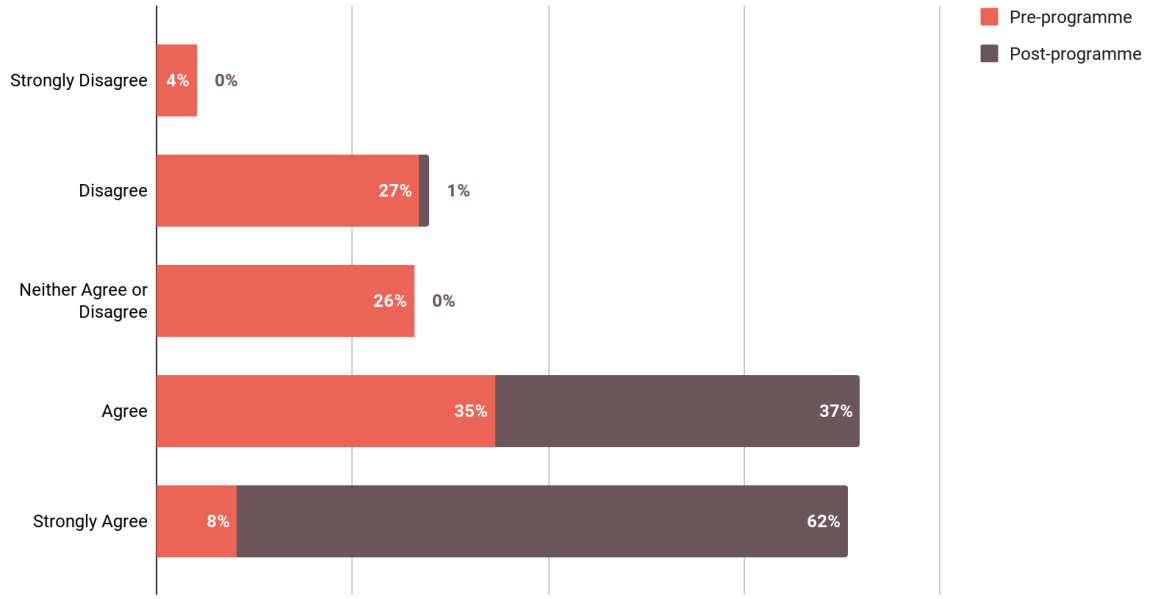
Session 2 Job Titles	Percentage of Respondents
Teacher	14%
Social Worker	13%
Assistant	8%
Early Help Key Worker	8%
Lecturer	8%

The remaining responses were all varied but can be broadly categorised into ‘Social Work’, ‘Teaching’ and ‘Other’ - with the majority of the ‘Other’ responses being specific titles of professional roles that work with children (e.g., ‘Contextual safeguarding coordinator’, ‘Tutor’, ‘Principal’, ‘Health Coordinator’).

4.2 DigiComp. 1 – Information and Data Literacy

The following section of this report highlights some of the key findings gathered from our monitoring and evaluation efforts that relate to DigiComp #1 'Information and Data Literacy', and its associated sub-competencies.

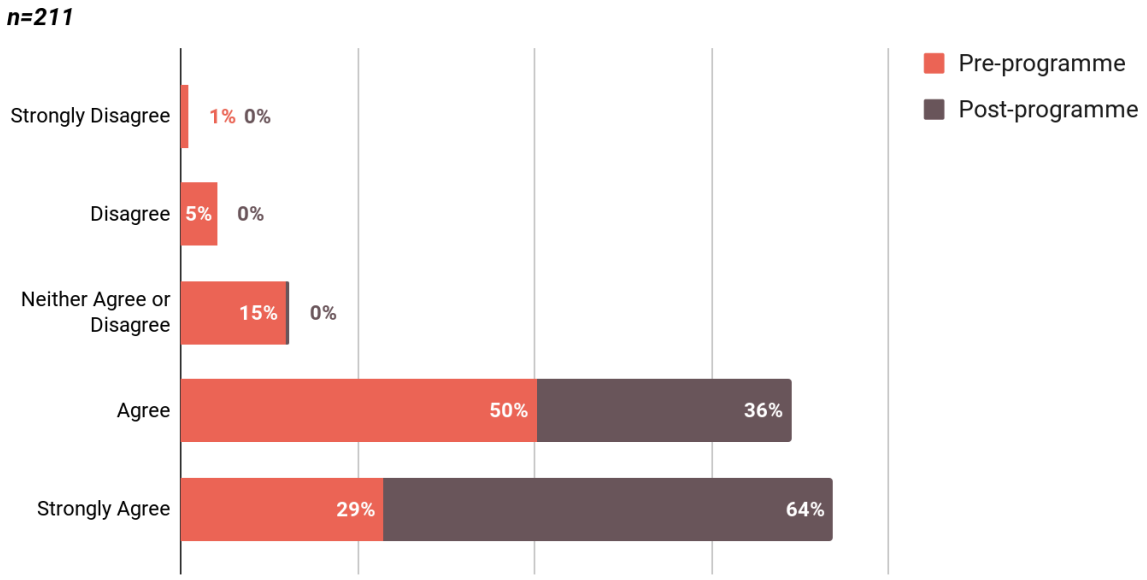
Fig. 1. "I understand the difference between mis, dis, and malinformation"



Prior to the programme, a minority of participants either "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" with the statement "I understand the difference between, mis, dis, and malinformation". In stark contrast, almost all (99%) of participants in the post-programme survey answered that they either "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed".

Such a sizable growth in participants' understanding of key media literacy concepts not only demonstrates the value of the programme, but also provides a stronger foundation from which a more comprehensive grasp of media and information literacy can develop.

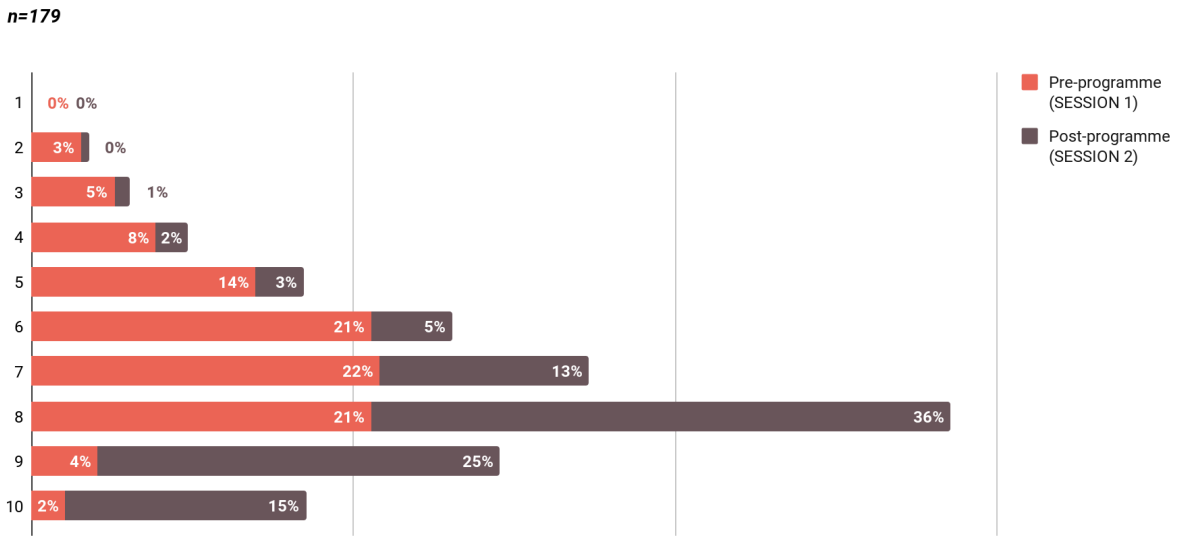
Fig. 2. "I recognise how social media and algorithms increase the spread of mis/disinformation"



In response to the statement "I recognise how social media algorithms increase the spread of mis/disinformation", all respondents marked either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree". This was up from 79% beforehand. Despite a strong pre-existing level of confidence regarding this topic – potentially as a result of the Dunning Kruger Effect – the programme was still able to make a significant impact.

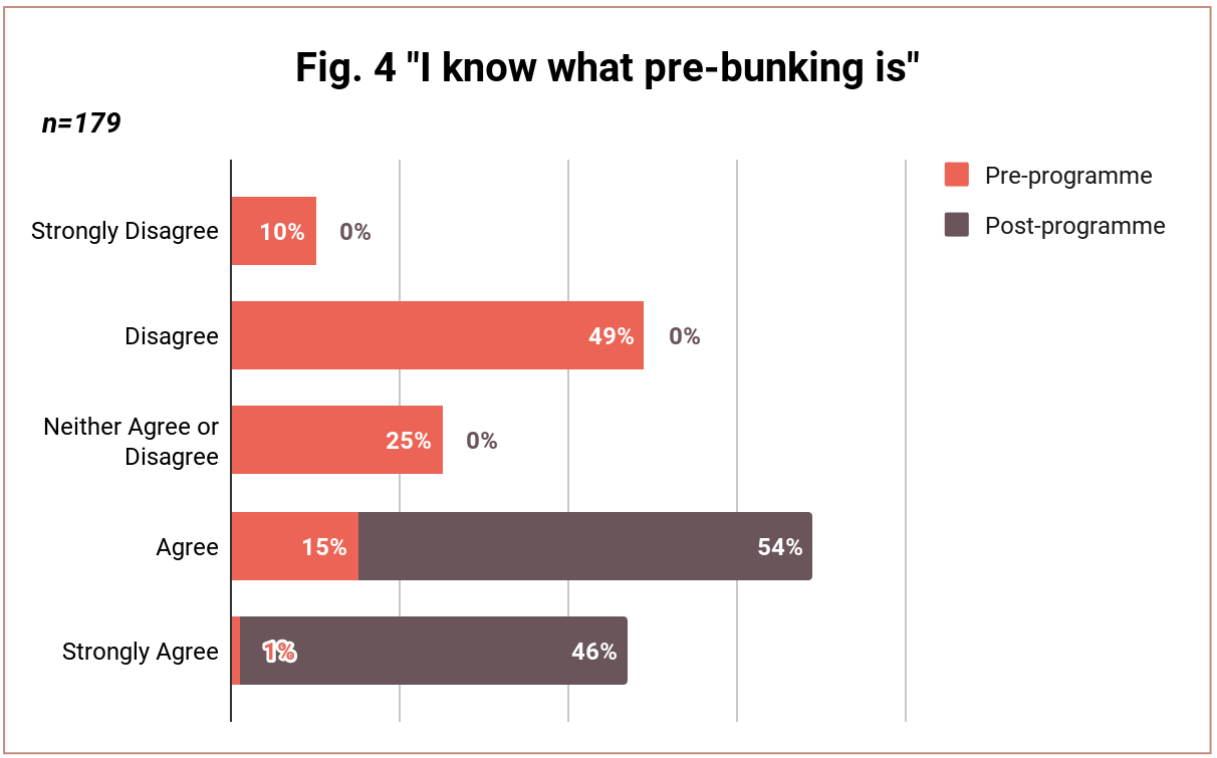
It is a testament to SOUK's training that every participant who did not possess such confidence - or the knowledge associated with it - prior to the programme, was able to have this rectified. Impacts such as these play a vital role in boosting practitioners' awareness of how problematic narratives take hold.

Fig. 3. "On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest), how would you rate your overall media literacy levels?"



To gain a more comprehensive picture of participants' confidence in their overall media literacy skills, we asked them to respond to the question "On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate your overall media literacy levels?" The responses to this question highlight a notable upward trend, as a large majority of respondents put 8 or above once they had undergone the training, contrasted with just 6% prior to the programme.

The drive to arm those working with young people with the skill sets to protect them from online harm has many components. There are a multitude of concepts, processes and practical tools for practitioners to familiarise themselves with in the battle against mis and disinformation. It is therefore important to know how these practitioners rank their overall skills, as it is only through boosting all facets of media literacy levels that the problem can be sufficiently tackled. As such, the growth depicted in the above graph is a strong endorsement of SOUK's training programme.



Among the focus areas of the programme was the issue of digital empowerment. A key component of this is utilising pre-bunking[7] to build resilience against mis and disinformation. Once they have acquired an understanding, those with a duty of care to young people are well-placed to implement pre-bunking interventions, helping to prevent young people falling prey to hostile online activities.

The graph above highlights the glaring absence of this knowledge before the programme, with just 16% of respondents professing to either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with the statement “I know what pre-bunking is”. Despite this, all participants responded either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” as a result of the programme. Such an outcome makes clear the immense value of this training in arming practitioners with a grasp of media literacy that is fit for the current landscape.

Quality Control Interview summary: DigiComp. 1 – Information and Data Literacy

The training programme on information and data literacy was well-received by interviewees, who found it to be “very well researched”, informative, and empowering. While some felt the terminology used could be more accessible, particularly for those unfamiliar with "media literacy," the program was praised for its clarity on concepts like misinformation and disinformation. Both interviewees highlighted the importance of the training on new technologies, particularly the section on deep fakes, which they found to be impactful and insightful. The intersection of misinformation, algorithms, and extremist ideologies was also of great interest to the interviewees, who appreciated the comprehensive nature of the training on this topic. While preferences for format (content heavy v. practical application of concepts) differed, both interviewees agreed that the training was valuable and necessary, and recommended further sessions on specific topics like algorithms.

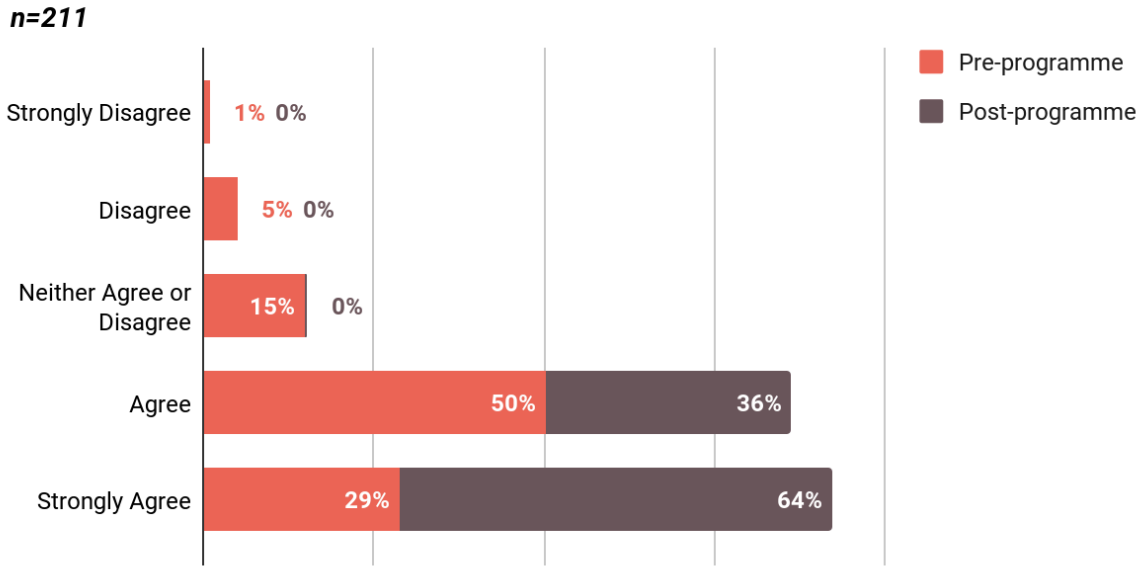
[7] ‘A Practical Guide to Prebunking Misinformation’ 2022.

For more information on Quality Control Interview, please see part 7. Appendix.

4.3 DigiComp. 2 Communication & Collaboration ; 4 Safety

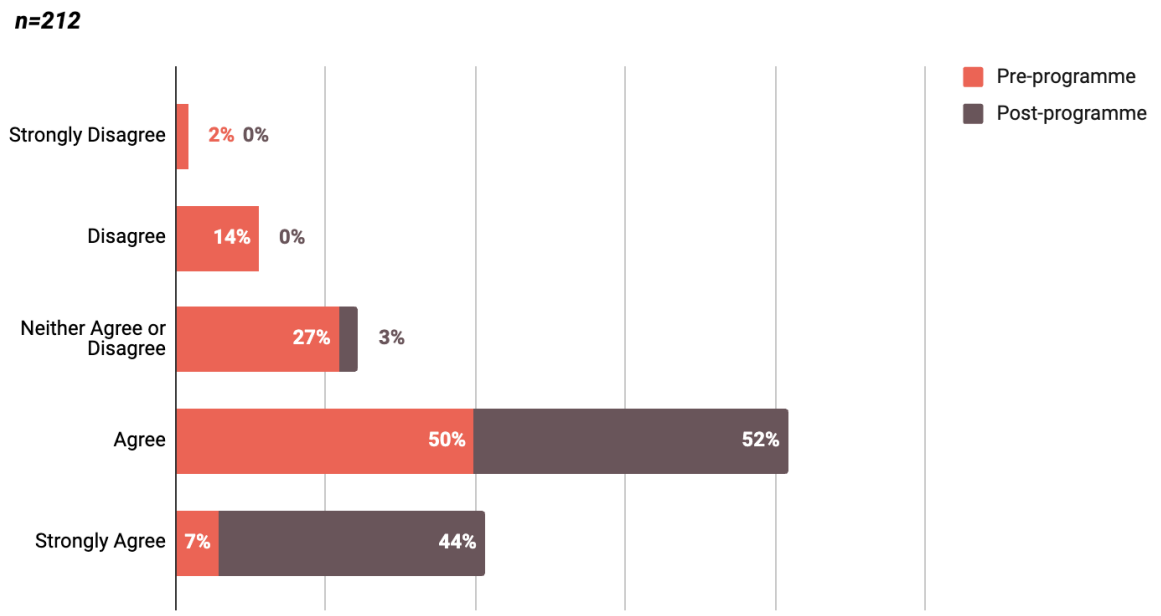
The following section of this report highlights some of the key findings gathered from our monitoring and evaluation efforts that relate to DigiComp 2 and DigiComp 4 'Communication & Collaboration' and 'Safety', and their associated sub- competencies.

Fig. 5. "I know the types of online harms that young people can encounter"



After the delivery of our programme, all participants either "Agreed" or "Strongly agreed" to being knowledgeable about the harms that young people encounter online. This meant that the 21% who previously lacked this knowledge left the programme better-positioned to identify how and where young people's safety is threatened online. This in turn has enhanced their ability to take the steps required to protect young people from these harms.

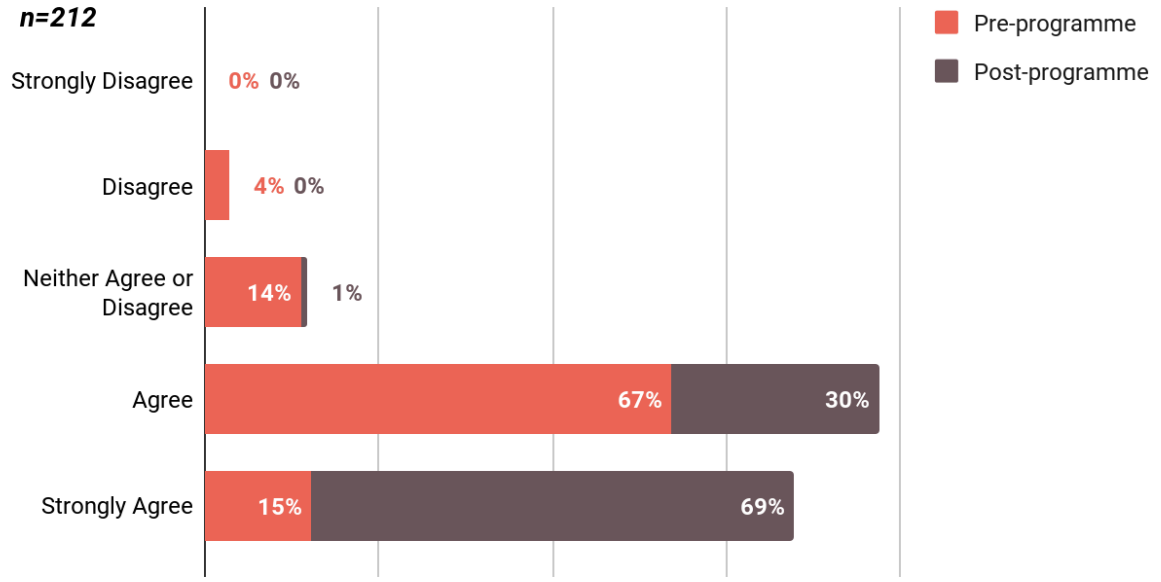
Fig. 6. "I can recognise techniques used by extremist groups to groom and recruit new members"



Among the most harmful consequences of online misinformation and disinformation is recruitment to extremist ideologies. By equipping practitioners with media literacy skills and developing their understanding of how information can be manipulated online, we can help build resilience against this danger.

This topic is heavily incorporated into the programme, with a particular focus on how extremist groups exploit young people's vulnerabilities for recruitment. The graph above demonstrates the clear improvement in participants' understanding of the topic following the session. Initially, a slim majority either "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" that they could recognise extremist recruitment techniques. By the conclusion of the programme, the same responses were recorded by almost all of the participants. We can therefore posit that our programme was effective in imparting the outcomes set out in DigiComp 1.2 "To analyse, compare and critically evaluate the credibility and reliability of sources of data, information and digital content."

Fig. 7. "I understand the reasons that make someone vulnerable to radicalisation"

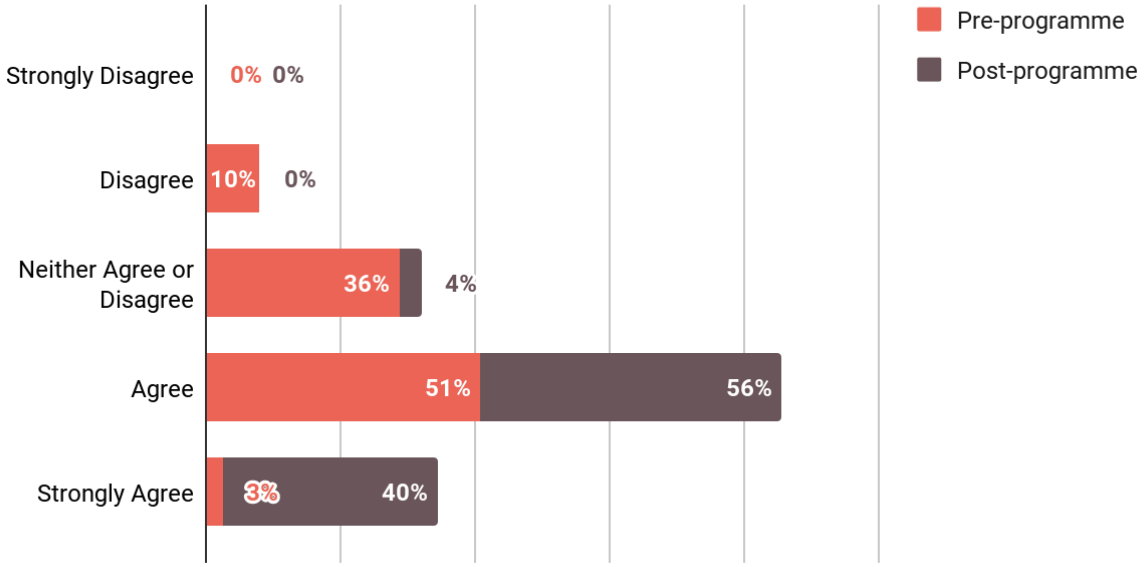


It is well understood among media literacy experts that those who fall victim to radicalisation often exhibit characteristics that render them more susceptible to extremist rhetoric. These can range from feelings of alienation to socio-economic disadvantage. To enable our beneficiaries to understand the nuances behind this reality, we sought to provide a range of examples that highlight the variety of pathways that can lead to radicalisation.

Following the programme, the majority recorded that they “Strongly Agreed” to understanding what makes someone vulnerable to radicalisation, compared with a small minority beforehand. A growth of 54% demonstrates a crucial improvement in practitioners’ understanding of whose safety may be at risk and why.

Fig. 8 "I can explain a young person's radicalisation process"

n=179

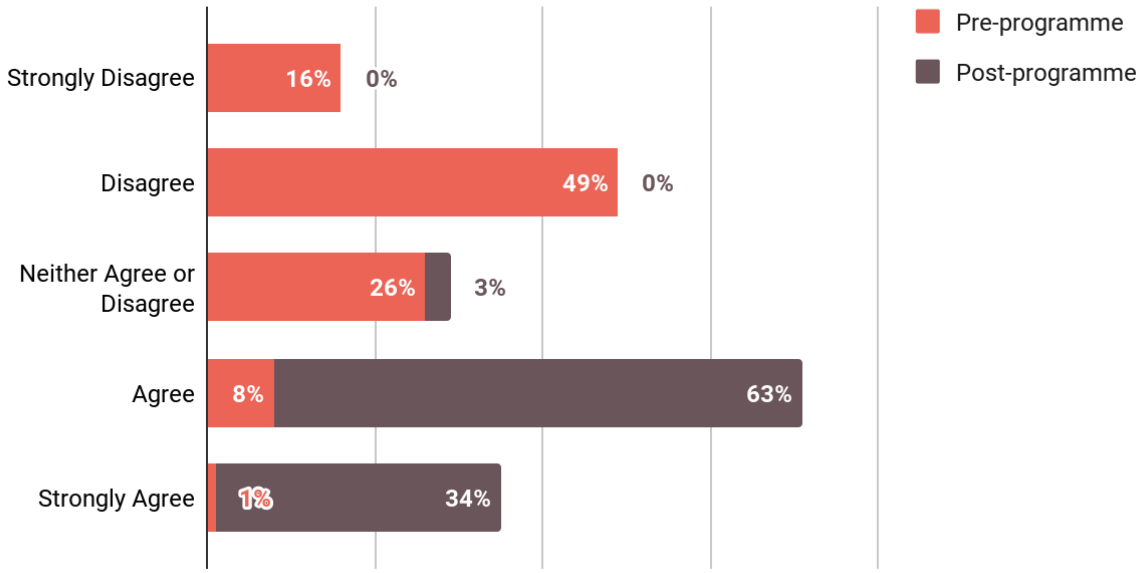


Prior to the programme, around half of participants felt they held the understanding necessary to respond “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to the statement “I can explain a young person’s radicalisation process”. Following the programme, almost all participants gave these responses.

This is another important development that pertains not only to a greater understanding among practitioners, but also to their ability to communicate this understanding. This applies to both conversations with other practitioners, and with young people. Such a development paves the way for informed discussion that correctly depicts the issue at hand.

Fig. 9 "I know how to implement a pre-bunking intervention"

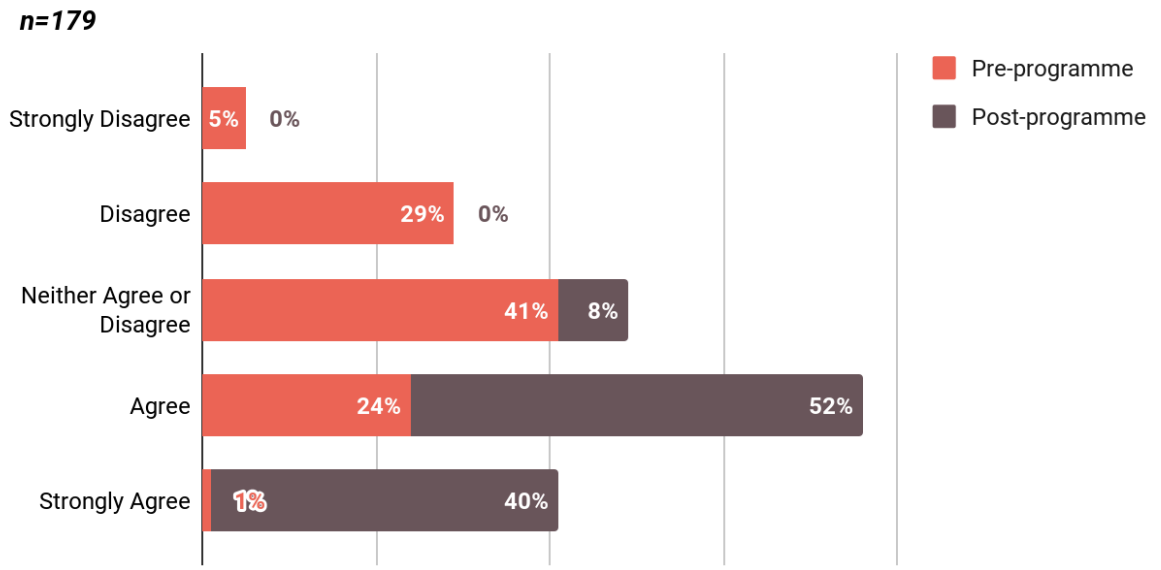
n=179



Further to a previous graph revealing a sharp rise in participants' understanding of what pre-bunking is, this graph showcases a similarly steep rise in participants' knowledge of how to implement a pre-bunking intervention. Nearly all (97%) of either "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" with the accompanying statement, compared with only a few (9%) from before the programme.

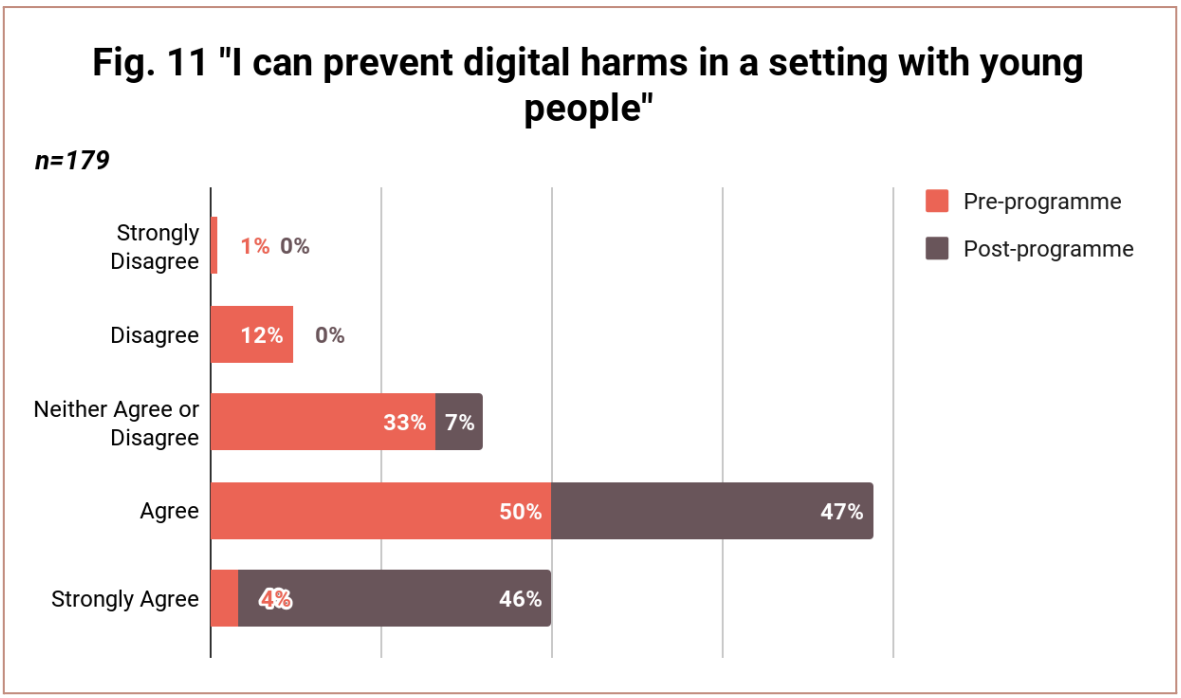
This vast improvement represents the value of the programme in giving professionals working with young people the tools to intervene against harmful online content. Acquiring a better grasp of the relevant subject matter is essential, but this is primarily so that it can be utilised by those in a position to take practical steps to keep young people safe, an achievement which is made evident by this graph.

Fig. 10 "I can confidently de-bunk a conspiracy theory in a setting with young people"

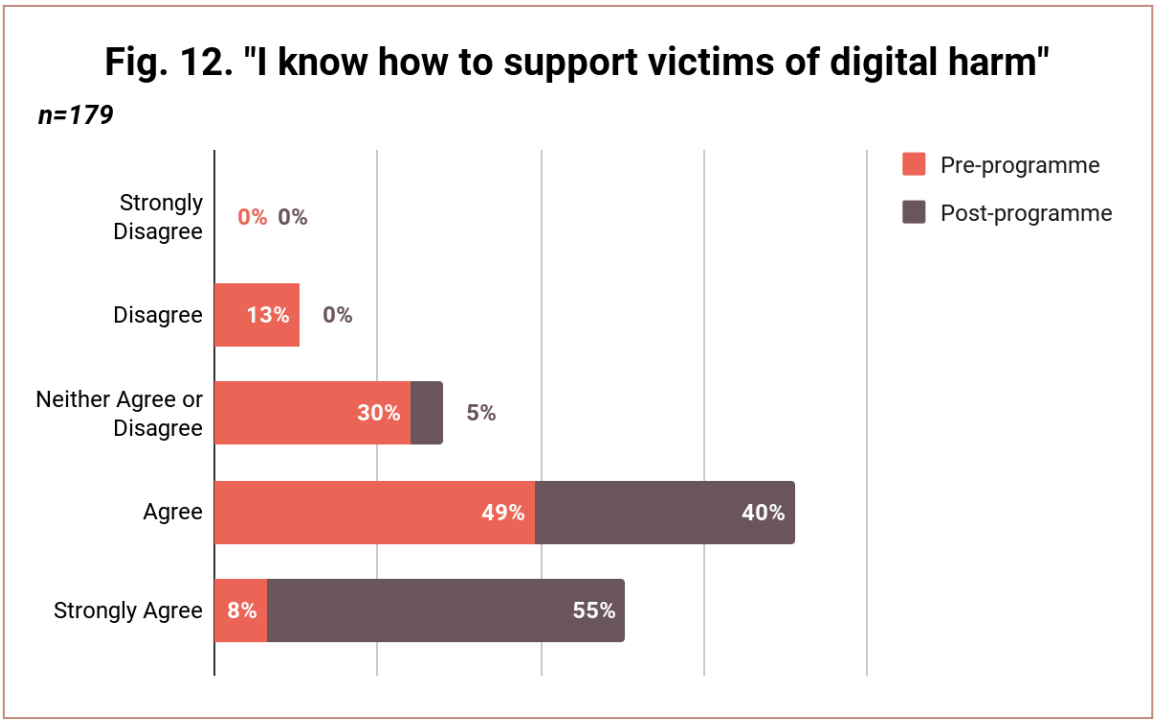


The pre-programme and post-programme surveys asked participants to respond to the statement “I can confidently de-bunk a conspiracy theory in a setting with young people”. Whilst only a small minority answered either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” beforehand, the post-programme survey saw these answers recorded by most respondents.

This development enhances the ability of those working with young people to directly tackle mis and disinformation, helping safeguard them from the associated harms. In addition, it bolsters their confidence in their ability to make such interventions, thus increasing their willingness to do so.



Preventing young people from digital harm is at the heart of the responsibilities of the educators that participate in our training. It is therefore pleasing to see the positive impact of the programme on their ability to do just that. Whereas around half (54%) of participants agreed with the statement "I can prevent digital harms in a setting with young people" in the pre-programme survey, 94% agreed in the post-programme survey. These figures point to a growth in participants' overall confidence and understanding of the topic of media literacy, and how to intervene to keep young people safe.

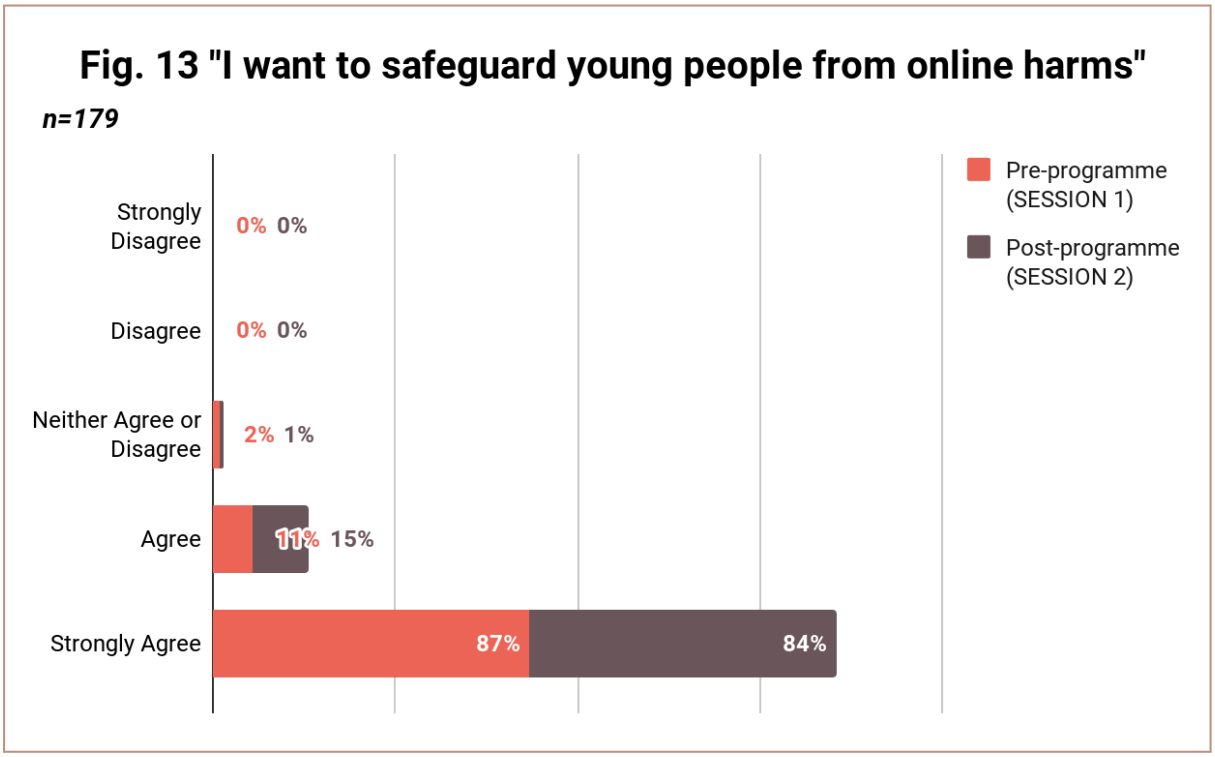


Prior to session 2, not a single participant responded "strongly agree" to the statement "I know how to support victims of digital harm", with only 36.36% responding "agree". The post-programme survey saw

this figure rise sharply, with 53.97% responding with “agree” and a further 38.1% responding “strongly agree”.

A truly holistic approach to tackling digital harm shouldn’t focus solely on education and prevention, but should instead supplement this focus with an approach that recognises and supports victims of digital harm. These figures demonstrate a successful method by which to achieve this objective.

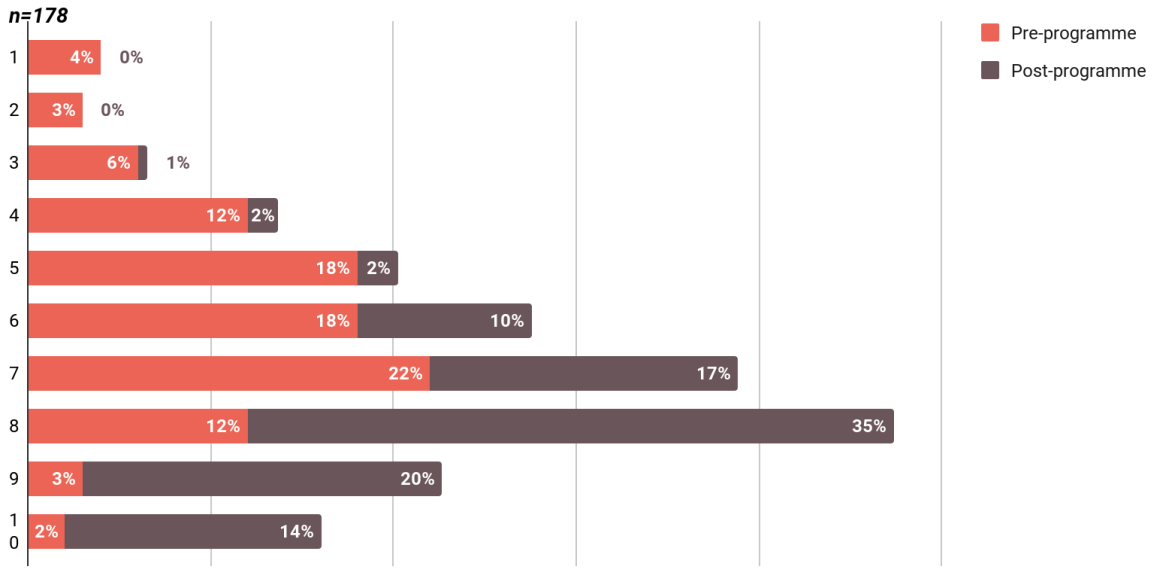
Fig. 13 "I want to safeguard young people from online harms"



To measure our participants’ commitment towards the objectives of the programme, we gathered their responses to the statement “I want to safeguard young people from online harms”. This gave us valuable insight into practitioners' attitudes regarding what they believe to be their responsibility as well as their feelings on the necessity and urgency of the project. Knowing participants' motivations (or lack thereof) can help us keep them engaged, and inform any adaptations we need to make to help achieve the project goals.

Although statistical differences between the two surveys were minimal, the number of respondents who marked “Strongly Agree” in response to the statement reduced slightly from 87% to 84%. This could reveal a tendency for some participants to experience a slight drop in motivation when confronted with this problem. Despite this, the desire to safeguard young people against online harms was exceptionally high beforehand, and remained so afterwards.

Fig 14 "On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest), how familiar are you with the different types of parental control options that exist"?



Although narrower in scope than many of the other findings presented in this report, the issue of participants' familiarity with parental controls is of importance, as it can enable professionals and parents to work together to protect young people from online harm through practical media literacy tools.

The above results highlight the effectiveness of our programme in relation to this objective.Participants were asked the question "On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest) how familiar are you with different types of parental control options that exist?" Whilst only a small minority (17%) marked their familiarity as an 8 or above prior to the training, a majority (69%) did so afterwards.

Quality Control Interview summary: DigiComp. 2 Communication & Collaboration ; 4 Safety

The training programme received positive feedback for its interactive format and focus on communication and collaboration. Participants appreciated the improved vocabulary on the subject, which allowed them to navigate media literacy with clarity and confidence when talking to young people. They felt more empowered to address important topics and felt that young people listened and respected their expertise. The interactive sessions with practical activities were engaging and informative, and the in-person format was preferred by participants. Legacy resources for lessons were suggested as an area for improvement to help staff adapt the knowledge to their specific contexts.

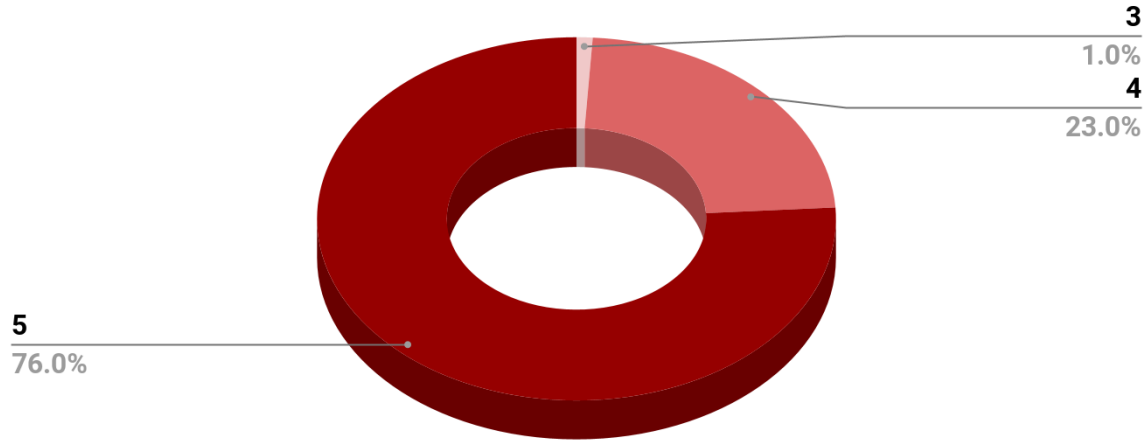
The training explored digital safety from various angles, including parental controls, the dark web, and the influence of algorithms and echo chambers on promoting extremist content. The intersection of media literacy and extremism was particularly highlighted by participants. The training helped the interviewees understand how easily young people can be drawn into extremism and conspiracy theories due to algorithms, and how important it is to address these concerns effectively. They also felt the training provided a better understanding of how to address concerns and safeguard young people from

harmful content and ideologies. It highlighted the importance of discussing these issues with young people, who may not be aware of the scale of the problem and their own vulnerabilities. The impact of algorithms on social media use emerged as a key strength of the training, and future programmes could emphasise this nuanced aspect of internet safety to foster a more critical understanding of online spaces and the current risks.

For more information on Quality Control Interview, please see part 7. Appendix and extras.

4.4 Process Evaluation

Fig. 15 "On a scale of 1-5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), how would you rate this session?"



In response to the question "On a scale of 1-5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), how would you rate this session?"almost all participants recorded either 4 or 5. This reflects the positive manner in which our sessions were received and the impact felt by those who took part in them.

What was your main takeaway from this session?

We asked participants to provide us with qualitative feedback about our programme. One trend that appears is positive language such as 'importance', 'excellent', 'understanding', 'information', or 'safeguarding'. These positive words can help us conclude that our sessions were effective in achieving the lesson's learning objectives. Moreover, among the numerous responses received to the above question, participants in Session 1 were particularly enthusiastic about the additional learning they received from the sessions, and noted down key terms that resonated with them. We noticed a trend of responses relating to the theme of 'mis/disinformation', better knowledge of the online space, a more robust understanding of how to safeguard children from online harms.

Among the numerous responses received, participants in session 2, a noticeable theme in the responses to this question was the prevalence of ‘pre-bunking’ as a main takeaway for our trainees. This is a positive illustration of our session’s ability to upskill practitioners on a key media literacy tool. Participants frequently cited "pre-bunking" as a key takeaway from the training, demonstrating the session's effectiveness in teaching this important media literacy skill. Feedback also highlighted the value of the training in providing practical strategies for discussing controversial topics with students, understanding the nuances of misinformation, and developing effective counter-narratives. Participants expressed a desire to apply these learnings directly to their work with young people, demonstrating the program's real-world relevance.

The main themes in the responses to this question for Session 3 were related to the newfound ability which participants have related to running their own media literacy sessions, their newfound knowledge of media literacy resources, and how to implement parental controls.

What can we improve for future sessions like this one?

While many trainees did not provide specific feedback, several constructive comments were offered. These included suggestions for incorporating short breaks to improve concentration, providing more detailed information on parental controls, offering additional guidance on supporting victims of digital harm, and incorporating opportunities to practise prebunking and debunking techniques in a hands-on manner. Some trainees expressed appreciation for the discussions and the opportunity to relate the content to their real-life experiences. We were delighted to see that many participants were very pleased with the sessions and wrote answers such as ‘no’ or ‘NA’, or ‘nothing’. This is a positive theme that emerged in the responses, yet we must also recognise the potential for bias in these responses, as those who responded to this question may be more likely to provide positive feedback than the numerous participants who instead opted to skip the question itself.

“How have you used this training since participating in our programme?”

Although we received a very small response rate for our quality control questionnaire, and as with our other responses we need to recognise the potential for bias in the responses collected, we received some positive feedback from those that filled out the questionnaire. Indeed, in response to this question participants that responded explained that they used these lessons in their classrooms, spoke about these themes with their students, including speaking to them about their internet use at home, and even how they have spoken to other adults about key learnings from the training.

5. Learning and Next Steps:

5. 1 What worked well?

Teaching of core media literacy vocabulary and 'darker' online topics

The most commented upon takeaway in the surveys was the new mis / dis / malinformation vocabulary. It was clear from direct questioning within the classroom that these terms were at best, vaguely familiar, but that most could not clearly define, or use them. We reinforced this vocabulary throughout the sessions, providing sufficient repetition and context to ensure that participants would retain key terms. Almost all (99%) of participants in the post-programme survey answered that they either "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" with the statement, "I understand the statement between mis, dis and mal information" (Fig. 1.). This was also reinforced by the Quality Control Interviews, where interviewees stressed their "improved vocabulary on the subject" which empowered them to go away and gain greater "confidence" and "authority" in discussing these topics.

The next most common set of comments in the surveys were around the 'darker' online topics, like the harmful use of new generative AI technologies and the 'dark web'. Some participants expressed a lack of understanding of these topics and/or shock at the young age some students can be exposed to online harms. The level of knowledge of these ideas was more varied within the group than the core media literacy terms and seemed to loosely correlate to general technological competency or interest of the individual and to a lesser extent, age. Those over 40 were particularly unfamiliar with most of the social media used by children and teenagers.

Given that education professionals often have limited knowledge of media literacy and online safety, it is essential that any media literacy programme establish a strong foundation in the core concepts and vocabulary of these topics.

Demonstrating and practising difficult conversations

One core part of the sessions was the demonstration of the best practice of how to have conversations with students about troubling/extreme topics. There was clear anxiety from some participants about how to talk about these issues which are common to other PSHE classes on controversial but important topics like sex education or extremism. We provided many examples of different "challenging" comments from students and then let the audience choose which example they would like to discuss together in smaller groups. This worked well in in person sessions, but was a little harder in online sessions, especially if they were bigger, but the activity still had some value online. The chance to have these discussions amongst different educational professions is also something which could not be achieved so easily if the programme was purely online and completed on a computer.

This best practice guide and the chance to see how others would respond to the same prompt were appreciated by the participants. In the survey, no participant responded "strongly agree" to the statement "I know how to support victims of digital harm", yet post-programme 53% responded with "agree" and a further 38% responded "strongly agree".

Being highly flexible and adaptable to diverse audiences of educational practitioners

One of the strengths of the project was the reach of the project and the scope of the settings that we reached, largest college in Bristol, largest college in North Wales, varied other institutions.

However, this furthered the challenge of delivering to multiple different types of educational practitioners in a given class as their needs and understandings differed. This diversity of groups tended to be higher in the larger online sessions (some of which had hundreds of participants) in contrast to the in person deliveries in specific educational institutions which often had a narrower recruitment pool.

The technological know-how and media literacy knowledge of the group differed, so the content began by catering to a middling/lower level of the technologically savvy and less technologically literate, while the spoken delivery could quickly engage deeper levels of understanding.

The core slides, resources, and spoken delivery were kept highly flexible and we skipped less relevant areas and spent more time on areas of difficulty for a given audience with a different makeup. We also polled and questioned the class regularly to get a sense of their competence and adapt delivery accordingly.

This adaptability and flexibility is an absolute necessity in a project like this which often had mixed groups in terms of age, background and educational profession and was designed in from the start.

Targeting teachers likely has a bigger cumulative effect than direct student sessions

In contrast to the sessions where SOUK has directly taught students, continuous professional development aimed at engaged teachers is likely to have a broader reach if the teachers integrate at least some of the newly acquired knowledge or skills into their teaching practices. In other projects we have struggled with recruitment of parents, and to a lesser extent other non-teaching professionals, while teacher recruitment is slightly more straightforward.

We would therefore reaffirm that the project design's focus on teachers – as opposed to students, parents, or older citizens – is one of the best ways to obtain value for money when trying to educate as many young people as possible on media literacy and online safety. And as a side benefit, many teachers noted that they see their own internet use in a new light after these sessions.

Using caution when discussing potentially negative issues at their schools with teachers

Understandably, teachers were a little cautious about talking about what their school may not have done well in the field of online safety and media literacy. It therefore helped to keep conversations about this topic non-school specific and avoid pushing them on the details of cases.

5.2 Challenges

Balancing the varying levels of participants' assumed knowledge

As online media literacy and safety resources are often tailored to specific age groups or demographics, we customised our presentation slides and resource guide to enable presenters to easily navigate and focus on relevant sections. Due to occasional discrepancies between expected and actual attendees, flexibility in delivery and content was crucial to address the diverse needs and interests of each group.

Participants tended to be more familiar with online safety rather than media literacy. Most were interested in, but less confident on the ideas of media literacy and how to practically apply it in the classroom. Teachers with a humanities or social sciences background tend to be the most vocally enthusiastic for media literacy and or critical thinking type activities. In practice, this meant we took on more of a facilitator (encouraging discussion) role that was more appropriate to the online safety sections, and more of a teaching (imparting knowledge) role for the sections on media literacy. The majority of participants had already received many types of safeguarding training, but the media literacy component was newer to them.

Participants expressed a desire for more specific lesson plans and implementation ideas. However, given the diversity in professional roles, subject areas, and target age groups among participants, it was challenging to provide universally applicable resources. While delivering training to more homogeneous audiences would be ideal, logistical constraints often make this difficult, particularly with in-person sessions that participants generally prefer. Online sessions offer a potential solution, as they allow for targeting larger, more specific audiences.

Improving recruitment in a challenging environment with busy schools

The main challenge we faced was the potential incompatibility of school recruitment timetables and project recruitment constraints based on one year grant funding cycles. Teachers' busy calendars make recruitment windows narrow. Sometimes these do not align with when we started recruiting in a short project cycle. Smaller organisations were more flexible in scheduling additional training sessions, while larger organisations often faced challenges due to pre-established CPD schedules. This flexibility also extended to the number of participants per session. While some institutions initially committed to full staff participation, scheduling conflicts sometimes led to changes, with training becoming an elective option in certain cases.[8]

Targeting teachers by email provides the majority of the bookings but there was a trade off between mass emailing with a low success rate and targeting individual teachers whose email addresses need researching and email's finding. SOUK's existing network of educators from other projects provided the quickest recruitment, but once exhausted, it could only take us so far. At times, there was significant variability between how many attendees planners said were coming and actual turnout. To mitigate

[8] Initially we were planning on finalising all sessions by the end of March. However, since we found some larger institutions who were keen to receive the training, yet were unable to organise this in a shorter time frame, we asked Ofcom to extend the programme until July 2024 to allow us to accommodate these larger institutions – helping us vastly exceed the minimum target of 500 professionals.

against this risk, we decided to over recruit for our sessions. The timings available in each school varied significantly too, so to keep up recruitment it helped to be quite flexible on the length of sessions delivered.

We would recommend funding providers that have considerable links to the school sector and a track record of strong recruitment, as recruitment can be the most challenging portion of a project of this type.

We may have faced a communication or marketing problem by labelling the course as 'media literacy' and not something using everyday language like: 'understanding and combating harmful content online' (for example). It is difficult to measure how much institutions were put off by language they didn't know, but at least one interviewee on the Quality Control Interviews mentioned that this was a potential issue. As the project unfolded we mitigated this challenge by changing the language we used to language that was both simple, enticing and that related to contemporary events.

Implementing a prebunking intervention after one intervention within a single session is unlikely

The sessions helped participants understand what prebunking is, with those who said 'Agree' or 'Strongly agree', going from 16% up to 100% as a result of the programme (Fig. 2.) Likewise, the numbers of those saying they "know how to implement a pre-bunking intervention", went up from 9% to 97% (Fig. 11.) .

However, we suspect the technique based prebunking[9] exercise was likely too complex for most participants to leave and *easily* implement after defining it and doing one practice exercise for 10–15 minutes. If we had more time, or decided that this was a core competency we wanted teachers to confidently introduce into classrooms, participants would need more time to understand the language around it and how to implement it in different classroom contexts.

Busy educational practitioners would be more likely to use the technique based prebunking exercise if they had ready to use age and context (secondary/primary teacher, social workers, Pupil referral units, etc) appropriate resources given to them. For those who attend the optional Session 3, our resource list partly filled this gap, but we did not have to properly demonstrate the technique based prebunking exercise with examples that were relevant to the audience. This would have required a more narrow audience to be relevant and would make recruitment and organisation of participants harder.

Therefore, if prebunking is a priority of later programme design, it needs greater time to be explained, demonstrated in context relevant to the audience (with lesson plans), and then worked through in an activity.

[9] Technique-based approach Technique-based prebunking shows audiences common techniques and tactics that are found in dis / misinformation. This approach helps audiences understand *how* they may be manipulated, rather than challenging the content of the manipulation (issue-based prebunking or debunking).

Survey collection response rates

The discrepancy in survey completion rates between in-person and online sessions highlights the continued importance of in-person classes for data collection, especially when participant feedback is a key performance indicator. Online sessions, while potentially reaching larger audiences, tend to have lower survey response rates. Collecting detailed demographic data would help tailor future messaging and delivery, but longer surveys risk lower completion rates. To improve participation in future evaluations, offering incentives like online shopping vouchers could be considered.

6. Conclusions & Ideas for Action:

In conclusion, this evaluation report offers a comprehensive overview of the key findings from our Media Literacy Train-the-Trainer programme, conducted in collaboration with Ofcom from September 2023 to July 2024. The report underscores the programme's success in achieving its core objectives, as evidenced by both quantitative and qualitative data collected throughout the project period.

A key achievement of the project was more than doubling the minimum target set by Ofcom in the invitation to tender, reaching over 1,000 professionals who work with children over the course of the performance period. This accomplishment demonstrates the programme's wide-ranging impact and its effectiveness in engaging its target audience. Furthermore, the evaluation highlights significant improvements in participants' media literacy levels and skills, showcasing the programme's positive contribution to the field. The programme's overall success also demonstrates that further nationwide programmes should follow, to continue building the confidence of professionals working with children in media literacy, so that they can effectively pass on these skills to young people.

As experts in media literacy training, we recognise the importance of disseminating lessons learned and best practices to advance the field as a whole. The concluding section of this report offers key recommendations and actionable insights for those seeking to develop and implement effective media literacy interventions. These insights are grounded in the evidence and experiences gathered throughout this project, and aim to support future efforts to equip individuals with the critical skills needed to navigate the complex digital landscape.

Ideas for Action:

1. Maintain a targeted focus on training teachers. Focusing on a specific target audience allows for more tailored content and delivery, ultimately enhancing the quality of implementation.

2. Retain activities allowing educators to practise challenging conversation with students. Practitioners appreciate real-life scenarios and interactive exercises. Remember that after an intervention, they will be the ones who will be directly faced with difficult situations and conversations. The more an educational intervention incorporates situations that beneficiaries will face in their daily praxis the more effective the programme's impact will be.

3. Retain both an online and in-person presence as there are advantages to both. There is value in both virtual and in-person training sessions. We recommend maintaining a flexible and hybrid approach in projects of this type.

4. For Train-the-Trainer projects, we recommend incorporating a longer and more flexible recruitment period into a project's design. Practitioners are busy and it can be difficult to obtain buy-in from participants who have busy diaries. Providing training sessions at various times of the day and days of the week can help with this challenge.

5. Use more 'real life case' studies to illustrate materials. We noticed better engagement from participants when using examples they can relate to.

6. Develop creative supplementary materials, such as screen recordings and cheat sheets, to support participants in implementing complex activities independently.

7. To reduce the time and effort required of participants, consider using only post-programme reflective surveys in future evaluations.

8. To mitigate potential issues with survey completion, providers can consider using remuneration or vouchers, although this can also lead to bias in responses as participants who are rewarded may be more inclined to only provide positive feedback in questionnaires and qualitative interviews.

7. Appendix -Quality Control Interviews:

We carried out two post-programme interviews with attendees of Session 1 and 2 of the Media Literacy programme. Despite offering this feedback opportunity to all participants of Session 1 and 2, unfortunately there was not much uptake in participation. However, the insights gained from this qualitative data allows us a better understanding of the impact of this programme on the participants' practice several months after they took part.

DigiComp 1: Information and data literacy

The interviewees highlighted specific strengths of the training programme in addressing the Digital competency of "information and data literacy". One interviewee described it as a "very well researched" training programme, highlighting the trust that is created through ensuring that materials are rooted in evidence.

Something that came through from the quality control interviews was the language that the training empowered practitioners to use. One of the interviewees had not heard the term "media literacy" before the training. This is helpful feedback that feeds into wider discussions about what terminology to use when approaching educational institutions to engage with this training. Something to consider for future training programmes is how we phrase the pitch of this training so that practitioners can see its relevance to their practice and introduce the term during the session itself. Something to consider is whether some institutions didn't engage with this programme due to lack of familiarity with the term "Media Literacy".

The helpfulness of terminology was also highlighted through the interviews. Despite both interviewees feeling like they had quite a lot of knowledge on the subject area, both of them highlighted that they did not know the difference between "misinformation" and "disinformation" and how it could manifest. The other interviewee also highlighted that the training had given her "better language around the subject" and facts to provide young people with. This interviewee also went on to say that she knew quite a lot of the terminology beforehand, but during the training realised that there was still a lot more she could learn.

Both interviewees discussed the information that was new to them during the training programme. This was particularly evident in the training element around new technologies. One of the interviewees mentioned that the Martin Lewis Money Saving Expert deepfake we showed was particularly impactful for her. She went on to say that the technological aspect of the training "plugged a gap" in her knowledge. On a practical level, she would have normally delivered in-house training and recognised that she wouldn't have been as knowledgeable in this area and now has a "better resource bank" as a result of this training, capacity building for the future.

The area of most interest for the interviewees was how misinformation, algorithms and extremist ideologies intersect. Both of them highlighted that the information on algorithms was "particularly interesting". One of the interviewees said she "definitely" felt more informed after the session, saying that the first part built the foundational knowledge, whereas the second part became more nuanced, particularly in relation to how people can be drawn in by different algorithms. The other interviewee

highlighted the comprehensive nature of the training and thought it was helpful to have an understanding of the whole process of radicalisation through technology.

Interestingly, the two interviewees differed on the type of format that they preferred the training to be in: one said that she preferred the more content heavy workshop, as she felt she took more from it, whereas the other would have preferred to see more around the practical application of these concepts with more practical examples such as expanding on the roleplay activities.

In terms of future recommendations for such training programmes to address the digital competency of information and data literacy, one interviewee would have preferred further training on algorithms, with a more in-depth follow up session on this topic. She also highlighted that when watching participants in the workshop she notices that they sometimes looked “taken aback” and “shocked”, making it clear the “massive need for this kind of training”.

DigiComp 2: Communication and Collaboration

As mentioned under the “Information and data literacy” section, one of the major strengths of this programme is the “improved vocabulary on the subject”. Both interviewees mentioned this strength since it has allowed them to navigate media literacy with terminology that allows them to communicate effectively on the subject. One of the interviewees said she felt “better equipped now” and more able to talk to young people about the subject, since she felt the knowledge gained had given her more “authority” than before, meaning that young people “listen” and “respect” her more, in her eyes challenging the notion that young people are always the experts in media literacy. Similarly, the other interviewee mentioned that the training had given her “confidence” when interacting with young people about relevant subjects to the training. She went on to say that these subjects were “important to discuss”, suggesting that she now feels more empowered to have these important conversations.

In terms of the format of the training programme, the interviewees were positive about the interactive nature of the sessions, praising the “practical activities”. One interviewee commented that the “training was particularly useful” as evidenced by the interactivity levels of the staff which she said “doesn’t always happen”. Both interviewees mentioned the preference for having this training in person. Moreover, since one of these groups was a large cohort, we accommodated this by bringing two facilitators, allowing us to run two groups simultaneously, which she said was “very helpful” for organising the logistics of the session. Other strengths mentioned was that the training was “very well-delivered” and the participants liked the “informal” and “interactive” style of training, as well as the “structure” of the sessions.

When considering other participants in the training programme, one interviewee, who also organised the sessions, said she felt “reassured” that others left the session with “improved understanding”. She also noted that there was a desire from staff to “replicate what they learnt in the training”. Moreover, the other interviewee highlighted that this collaboration had allowed them as a provider to “plug a gap” they felt was absent in schooling.

In terms of the impact of this training on future practice, one interviewee, who specialises in safeguarding, commented that the physical resource of the books provided was “useful”, especially as safeguarding is normally responsive to different situations. One of the interviewees also mentioned that

the training had provided more awareness on best practice in media literacy, and in future will be asking students to “consider the validity of information” “rather than preaching to them”. She went on to say that the approach to communication in the training, “connection not rejection”, was helpful when considering that young people talk about “trust” and “truth” and that not knowing what’s real can sometimes leave young people feeling “lost”.

One area of improvement that was highlighted to consider for the development of communication and collaboration competencies of this work, was the production of legacy resources to be used in lessons. Despite participants of the programme being keen to replicate what they learnt in the training with the students, as one interviewee pointed out, this relies on the ability of the staff member to apply the knowledge learnt and tailoring it to the needs of their context. The interviewee suggested that an accompanying lesson pack for staff would allow them to immediately apply their learning with students. In order to create effective resources the beneficiary group would need to be somewhat streamlined. In this programme, we trained staff who worked with primary students as well as college students, therefore creating a lesson pack for such a wide range of ages would be less effective. However, for future programmes, especially those where there is a specific age demographic of young people that staff work with, it is definitely worth considering what resources can be created to bridge the gap between training received and the implementation of the lessons learnt, especially for professionals who feel less confident in delivering this type of work.

DigiComp 4: Safety

In this project, the concept of digital safety was explored from multiple angles, including parental controls, understanding the dark web, and how algorithms and echo chambers can promote extremist content. Interestingly, the content around how media literacy and extremism intersect was what the interviewees highlighted the most.

One interviewee mentioned that she was “more aware of extremist behaviours” after the training. She also went on to say that as a result of the training she realised how “easy” it is for young people to be absorbed into “rabbit holes” of “extremism” and “conspiracy theories” due to algorithms on social media. This is particularly pertinent in light of recent extremist violence across the UK following the Southport murders. Further to this, one interviewee mentioned how the training “hammered home” that “radicalisation can happen to anyone”, highlighting the growing concerns around extremist behaviours in young people who can be radicalised exclusively online.

One of the interviewees also mentioned that she has a better understanding of how “clever” and “insidious” propaganda can be and how important it is to be aware of this reality. After the training she felt she had a “greater understanding” of how to address concerns with young people, effectively safeguarding them from harmful content and ideologies. She went on to say that before the training she “wouldn’t have discussed the relevant issues with young people as much” and felt that the workshop had made clear the importance of the issue. Similarly, the other interviewee also felt like she had a “greater understanding of how to address concerns”, hopefully leading to improved safeguarding capacity, adding that she thought “young people aren’t aware of the scale of the problem and their own vulnerabilities”.

Since much has been done in educational institutions to address general internet safety in line with government guidelines, it seems that a strength of this training was the exploration of the impacts of algorithms on social media use. Both interviewees highlighted the sections on algorithms and echo chambers as something new to them in terms of internet safety. In future media literacy training, an emphasis on the more nuanced side of internet safety, such as the influence of algorithms and the formation of echo chambers, could be beneficial for fostering a more critical understanding of online spaces and the current risks to safety.

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