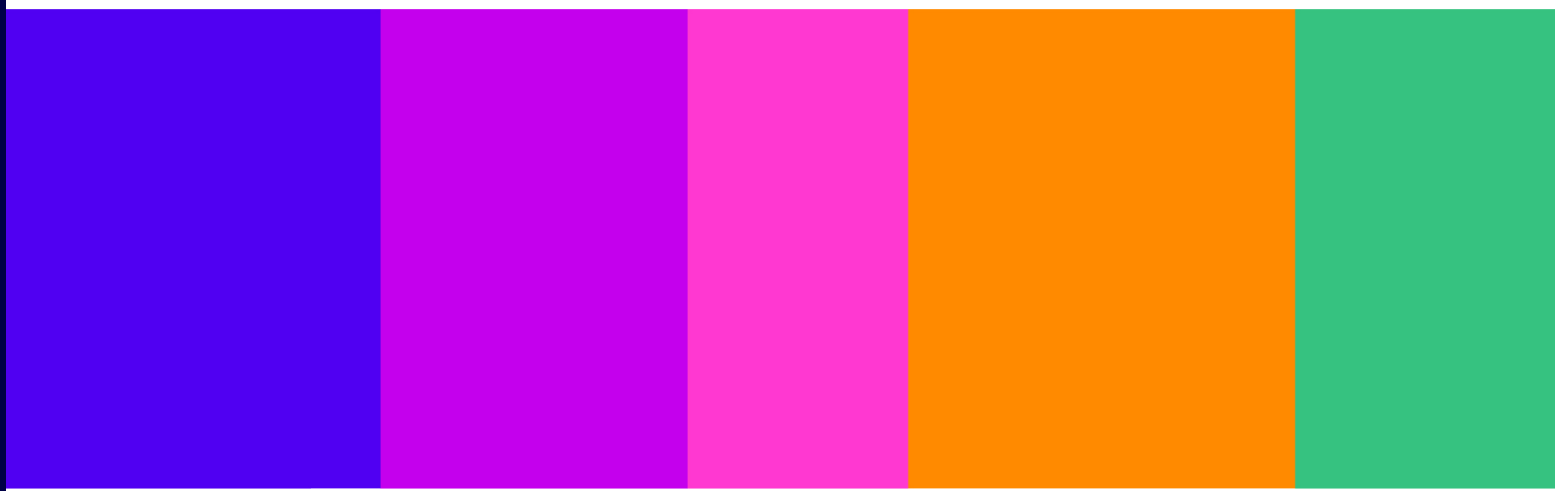


What works in delivering train the trainer media literacy interventions

Projects for professionals working with
children and young people

Report

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Contents

Section

Overview	3
Introduction	5
Summary of activities.....	7
Key findings: marketing and recruitment.....	9
Key findings: design and delivery.....	11
Key findings: outcomes for participants.....	14
Evaluation methodology.....	17
Conclusion and next steps	18

Overview

This report examines three media literacy train the trainer pilot programmes supported by Ofcom that ran from autumn 2023 to spring 2024 led by [Internet Matters](#) (for frontline workers in children's residential care), [stem4](#) (for professionals working in healthcare, social care and the youth sector) and [Shout Out UK](#) (SOUK) (for teachers and educational professionals). Through this work over 1700 professionals that support children and young people in the UK were trained to ask more, better and different questions about the online lives of the children they work with.

Understanding more about what children and young people are doing online and how it impacts their thoughts, feelings and opinions creates a more rounded and realistic perspective which these experts can draw on in their work. As the participant quotes below demonstrate, we have found that investing in this kind of training has real benefits both for the professionals and the young people in their care. We would like to thank our delivery partners in this work - Internet Matters, stem4 and Shout Out UK, and thank the professionals who participated.

This report sets out reflections from the delivery programmes and draws out common challenges and opportunities. These are shared here to support others considering 'train-the-trainer' programmes in media literacy for professionals working with children and young people.

This report suggests getting the attention of busy professionals, making the case for media literacy continuous professional development (CPD) and keeping them engaged over the course of the training are some of the key challenges. The three organisations thought on their feet and came up with swift responses to challenges as they arose. Therefore, our findings are structured under three core processes that support the effective planning and management of programmes: recruitment and marketing, design and delivery.

What we found – key tips as to what works

The report identifies three key recruitment and marketing approaches:

- Ensure you have a **long lead time for registration**
- **Use various channels** as part of the recruitment and marketing processes including targeted emails, snowballing approaches, press releases, social media campaigns, word of mouth and referrals.
- **Design a bespoke learning platform** or portal for practitioners to find out more about the training and to make it easy for them to enrol and access information.

The report identifies seven key design and delivery approaches:

- **Have a flexible model** to make the training more accessible – for example, bitesize modules, a hybrid approach (online and face to face), webinars, and recorded content.
- **Co-design the training content** with organisations to make it relatable to the audience.
- **CPD accreditation – offer accreditation** to make the training attractive to practitioners and to encourage completion, particularly in sectors where CPD certificates are recognised.
- **Employ user-friendly language** – media literacy as a term didn't work for all professionals. Breaking down complex language, or using familiar language, can make a vital difference
- **Offer varied training delivery styles**, such as interactive discussions, breakout rooms, scenarios, practical tips and guidance to cater for different learning styles.

- **Tailor the content of your training to suit varying levels of knowledge.**
- **Provide additional resources following on from the training** to help practitioners apply what they have learnt at the training in their respective workplaces.

Introduction

Making Sense of Media (MSOM) is Ofcom’s programme of work to help improve the online skills, knowledge and understanding of UK adults and children. In October 2024 we published our [Three-year Media Literacy Strategy](#) setting out our three strategic priorities: Research, Evidence and Evaluation; Engaging Platforms; and People and Partnerships. Understanding what works in media literacy delivery is a core element of our People and Partnerships programme and we achieve that through our research activities, and our work commissioning organisations to deliver media literacy programmes. We support organisations to pilot interventions that test and evaluate different approaches in media literacy delivery and build best-practice evidence to be shared with others.

This report builds on our [What works in media literacy delivery](#) publication and sums up three pilot train the trainer programmes for practitioners working with children and young people which ran from late 2023 to the end of March 2024. The programmes were commissioned after Ofcom identified a gap in CPD related to media literacy for professionals supporting children and young people. The successful organisations had a track record in delivering media literacy training, and experience in reaching professionals who supported children eligible for pupil premium payments, with mental health challenges, or with experience of care. They were drawn from the following professions:

- Teachers and education professionals
- Professionals working in healthcare, social care and the youth sector
- Frontline workers in children’s residential care

Overview of projects and outcome areas (drawn from Ofcom’s [media literacy outcomes bank](#))

Project organisation	Target group	Outcome areas				
		Access, use and content creation	Online safety, privacy and protection from harm	Critical thinking about content	Digital and media savvy	Digital citizenship and media engagement
Shout Out UK (SOUK)	Teachers and education professionals		●	●	●	●
stem4	Professionals working in healthcare, social care and the youth sector		●		●	●

Internet Matters	Frontline workers in children's residential care		●	●	●	
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All projects were required to deliver evaluation reports which we are also publishing. They were not offered evaluation support by Ofcom. This report draws together the key learnings and insights from the evaluation reports of these three organisations.

The report is in five chapters:

Chapter one: A summary of activities (including reach).

Chapter two: Key findings: marketing and recruitment

Chapter three: Key findings: design and delivery

Chapter four: Key findings: outcomes for participants

Chapter five: Evaluation methodology

Chapter six: Conclusion and next steps

Thank you to evaluation expert Elizabeth Kwaw, who produced this report

Summary of activities

The programme involved three organisations.

Shout Out UK (SOUK) delivered train the trainer media literacy programmes for teachers and education professionals. The programme ran from 1 October 2023 until 31 March 2024. The training focused on digital resilience, and skills to help safeguard vulnerable young people and promote active and positive digital citizenship. Their outreach extended to all secondary schools, Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools, and Further Education (FE) institutions as well as areas where they had pre-existing contacts. The project targeted eight boroughs in London, Leicestershire, Blackpool, Manchester, West Sussex, Surrey, Kent, Portsmouth, Bristol, Sheffield, Leeds, Rotherham, Denbighshire and Conwy.

stem4 offered media literacy training for those working in healthcare, social care and the youth sector so that they could better support young people in getting the most from the online world and avoid harms. The training was led by consultant clinical psychologist Dr Nihara Krause and consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist Dr Richard Graham. The training was delivered from September 2023 to March 2024.

Internet Matters delivered “Taking Care Online”, a CPD-accredited free training on digital safety for frontline workers in children’s residential care. Interactive virtual training sessions took place between the end of February 2024 till mid-May 2024 and were delivered by the organisation and online safety expert Karl Hopwood. The three-hour training session was submitted for CPD accreditation, which was achieved. A total of 130 participants received CPD certificates as a result.

Overall, 1,760 professionals participated in the sessions delivered, combined.

Overview of the activities delivered

Organisation	What did the project do?	Project aims	Activities	Participants	Co-design
Internet Matters Limited	Delivered a media literacy and online safety training titled ‘Taking Care Online’ for front line workers in the children’s residential care sector	To equip participants with the knowledge and confidence to understand the benefits and risks of digital technology for young people, while supporting online safety	6 x 3-hour live virtual training sessions, 2 x 1-hour mini training sessions and a 1 x 1 hour check-in session plus a one-hour recorded session made available online	183 participated in the training of which 146 attended the three-hour sessions	No

Organisation	What did the project do?	Project aims	Activities	Participants	Co-design
stem4	Delivered a 'Media Literacy and Mental Health Training' course to health and social care professionals that support young people, and youth workers	To increase participants' confidence in discussing online issues with young people, and to help them address digital inequalities	Four 60-minute webinars or modules followed by a shared-learning webinar. The four modules were distilled into a half-day lightning course, and a 90-minute session to suit the needs of different practitioners. Recordings of these sessions were made available to participants to watch on-demand via a dedicated online training portal	523 participants	No
Shout Out UK (SOUK)	Delivered media literacy training for teachers and education professionals	To improve participants media literacy levels, and to provide them with the skills and confidence needed to cascade this knowledge to the young people they teach or support	Three separate media literacy sessions; 'in person' training sessions that built on each other with interactive exercises and discussion. Sessions were aligned with the EU Digital Competencies (DigiComp) Framework. Participants were required to attend at least two sessions and encouraged to attend the third.	1,054 participants	Yes

Key findings: marketing and recruitment

The recruitment and marketing approaches whilst similar in some areas, such as using social media channels, were also tailored to suit the target groups that the projects wanted to engage.

Internet Matters used a 'snowballing' approach and promoted their training sessions via email campaigns to a range of care sector organisations who were asked to forward these onto their workforce and other organisations in their network. Additional marketing activities included promoting the training through a press release, Ofcom's Making Sense of Media Bulletin and Internet Matters' social media channels. Participants were sent email reminders ahead of each training sessions. Booking for the training sessions were opened two to three months prior to the start of the training sessions to maximise registrations.

stem4's recruitment approach mainly involved a referral process plus a combination of social media marketing including paid marketing via LinkedIn.

SOUK's main recruitment and marketing approach involved sending targeted emails to contacts in schools. The project first created a school directory comprising all the secondary schools across England and Wales that scored 1 on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), to ensure that they were prioritised, and sent emails to contacts in these schools.

What worked well

All three organisations employed methods to spread the net as wide as possible to maximise recruitment.

- **Internet Matters found that partnering with organisations, such as Ofsted, who have links to care sector organisations, helps in gaining access to the relevant target group.** Ofsted provided contact details for key organisations in the care sector that Internet Matters could approach.

stem4's referral process worked well, 40-55% of the participants reported that the training had been recommended by their organisation or a colleague.

Using a bespoke training portal for participants helped maximise registrations. stem4 made it easy for the professionals to register for the training, find information about the courses on offer and access the content (both live and on-demand). Participants were also able to track their progress on the portal.

- **As well as sending direct emails to key contacts, SOUK used other digital communications methods such as monthly newsletters and social media channels to promote the programme.** As the project progressed, they changed their marketing language from media literacy to 'understanding and combating harmful content online,' so practitioners could relate better to the training.
- **Targeting key members in schools using direct email approaches was the most effective way to recruit and engage with teachers and education professionals.** This approach provided most bookings for SOUK.

Challenges

Media literacy is not well understood as a term and can hamper engagement. SOUK found that as the project progressed, they changed their marketing language from media literacy to ‘understanding and combating harmful content online,’ so practitioners could relate better to the training. stem4 renamed a session to use language related to online safety.

- Sending targeted emails can be time intensive and resource heavy. SOUK found targeting individual teachers whose email addresses needed researching was time intensive but worth the effort as it provided the majority of bookings for the project

Ofcom tips for marketing and recruitment

- Tailor your recruitment and marketing approaches to suit your target group and their work settings, and where relevant, partner with another organisation that can provide access to the organisations you would like to reach.
- Use bespoke learning platforms, where possible, as a one-stop option to make it easy for practitioners to register and access information about the training.
- Build a longer and more flexible recruitment period into your project’s design to cater for practitioners who have busy diaries

Key findings: design and delivery

The organisations took differing approaches to design and delivery to best suit their target audiences. Internet Matters and stem4 offered a suite of online and interactive interventions.

Internet Matters' delivery involved live virtual sessions – one three hours' long, and one lasting for an hour – delivered by media literacy experts, plus interactive breakout sessions. The one-hour session was a condensed version of the three-hour course and focused on practical strategies that participants could use to support young people in their care, developed in response to high dropout rates between registration and attendance. The project also delivered a one hour 'live' check in session and provided a recorded version of the one-hour session online.

stem4 designed different versions and formats of the training for maximum flexibility to fit the needs of the target groups of professionals. This included:

- Four-module training (the full training) - this consisted of four modules, each one-hour long. Each module was delivered in a live webinar, delivered over four sessions, one per week. The modules were lunchtime sessions designed to fit in with practitioners' schedules. The content of this training was also offered as webinar recordings via their bespoke training platform.
- Lightning course - the original four-module course was adapted into a half-day lightning course, delivered live over Zoom, for professionals who preferred to have a half-day training session, rather than multiple, shorter sessions spread over a month.

stem4 found that the term media literacy was not familiar to practitioners in the health and social care sector. The GPs who were at the training reported that they did not know what it meant and were more familiar with the term mental health first aid. The project updated their content on a regular basis and blended media literacy knowledge with developments in mental health, health literacy and child development to associate media literacy with familiar concepts that practitioners could identify with.

Whilst maintaining media literacy as the core focus, the project also rebranded and repackaged the four-module training into a 90-minute session titled Online Safety- First Aid (OSFA). OSFA became the most popular out of the three versions offered by the project and appealed to time-poor practitioners because it was a shortened version of the other training formats. This training was delivered as a live webinar which was also recorded and made available.

Shout Out UK (SOUK) adopted a co-design approach to their training by calling or emailing each of the institutions they worked with to get a better understanding of their context, needs and what they wanted to get out the sessions, and what would have the most impact with regards to applying the learnings in their respective settings. This ensured that they could tailor the training to the groups they were supporting.

As a result, the project was able to customise their presentation slides and resource guides to enable their presenters to easily navigate and focus on relevant sections that would be of most interest to the teachers and education practitioners.

Further, to ensure that practitioners could feed into subsequent training sessions, and to tailor the content to the needs of the young people that they worked with, the project asked them to provide

feedback at the end of the first session, including any other topics that they wanted to address in the following session.

Almost all the institutions they worked with, except for two colleges, requested in-person workshops. The delivery model included interactive exercises and discussions, and reflective exercises on participants educational institution's strengths and weaknesses. The project provided an overview of online resources that could further support participants to embed media literacy into their educational contexts, these included various platforms, tools and initiatives developed to support media literacy and online safety. Participants were also provided with examples of technique-based 'pre-bunking' demonstrations and exercises modelling difficult conversations with students.

What worked well

There were a number of areas reported by the projects that worked well with their design and delivery approach, these include:

- **Making the training accessible by offering flexible modes of delivery.** Practitioners wanted flexible options that enabled them to access the training at a time that worked for them. Internet Matters offered bite-size 'anytime' online learning modules, stem4 repackaged its core content into a half-day session and SOUK offered a hybrid approach such as having both an online and in-person training sessions which meant that practitioners had the flexibility to choose what approach suited them best. The project also provided training sessions at various times of the day and across different days of the week to help engage participants who were 'time poor.'
- **Using creative supplementary materials,** such as screen recordings and cheat sheets, to support participants in applying what they had learnt at the training in their various work settings.
- **Offering CPD accreditation on completion of the training or a certificate of completion** encouraged engagement. Those in the youth sector, in particular, valued certificates of completion/CPD certificates.
- **Designing training sessions with opportunities for interaction, discussion and networking –** practitioners that worked in children's residential care enjoyed the interactive elements of the training, such as the breakout sessions, and appreciated opportunities to network during these.
- **Using more real-life case studies to illustrate different scenarios,** practitioners in the education sector were more engaged when they could relate to the examples used.
- **Balancing the varying levels of participants' knowledge to adapt the training to the diverse audiences of educational practitioners –** SOUK had to tailor their content to suit the varying levels of knowledge and needs of the participants. They also used language to describe media literacy concepts that the teaching practitioners could identify with.

Challenges

- The projects experienced similar issues related to engagement: Internet Matters' project faced a few challenges such as technological issues during delivery of the training sessions and high dropout rates partly due to practitioner's busy schedules. The project team felt that

co-designing the training with the organisations they worked with might have made the training more relevant to practitioners' work settings and could have led to better completion rates.

- The term media literacy did not make sense to many participants across the projects. stem4 rebranded its content as 'Online Safety-First Aid' to make it more relatable.
- For SOUK the key challenge was having to work around schools' timetables and teachers' busy calendars which made the recruitment window narrow, particularly, when factoring in a short project cycle. Smaller organisations, they found, were more flexible in scheduling in additional training, whereas larger organisations were constrained by pre-planned CPD schedules.

Ofcom's tips for design and delivery

- Have a flexible model to make the training more accessible – for example, bitesize modules, a hybrid approach (online and face to face), webinars, and recorded content that enable practitioners to access the training at a time that suits them.
- Co-design the training content with targeted organisations to make it relatable to the audience.
- CPD accreditation – offer accreditation to make the training attractive to practitioners and to encourage completion, particularly in sectors where CPD certificates are recognised.
- Employ user-friendly language – media literacy as a term didn't work for all professionals. Breaking down complex language, or using familiar language, can make a vital difference.
- Offer varied training delivery styles, such as interactive discussions, breakout rooms, scenarios, practical tips and guidance to cater for different learning styles.
- Tailor the content of your training to suit varying levels of knowledge to help participants engage better with the training.
- Provide additional resources following on from the training to help practitioners apply what they have learnt at the training in their respective workplaces.

Key findings: outcomes for participants

Findings from projects' evaluation reports identified outcomes for participants across a range of areas relating to media literacy knowledge, skills and confidence. Participants reported increased confidence supporting the children and young people they worked with, and in talking about media literacy. Some said they intended to implement what they had learned into their work.

The training delivered by the organisations developed participants' knowledge, skills and confidence in discussing young people's online experiences as part of the support they offer to them. Participants said they felt more confident in offering support to young people who might be experiencing online harms, and "better equipped" and "more empowered" to have important conversations about media literacy with young people and potentially help the young people develop their own skills.

"I feel that I can now talk about algorithms and influencers and know what I am referring to. I have a better understanding of what children may be searching for and how this may have a future impact on them and their mental health."

(stem4 workshop participant)

It has increased my confidence to raise my curiosity about it during assessment processes especially, helping me to understand this aspect of young people's lives. It has increased my awareness and placed it more centrally into the psychological support I provide."

(stem4 workshop participant)

"I now have a greater understanding of how to address concerns... young people aren't aware of the scale of the problem and their own vulnerabilities".

(SOUK workshop participant)

"The training has given me confidence when interacting with young people"

(SOUK workshop participant)

"It can sometimes be scary to have those conversations when you think I actually don't know enough, but now I feel I know a bit more to start having those really open conversations."

(Internet Matters workshop participant)

"I think I am more alert to a comment like 'I saw this online' - e.g. for a reason why they want an ADHD diagnosis – [and am] more confident to explore whether this information is accurate and then signposting to NHS information."

(stem4 workshop participant)

The training delivered by the organisations increased participants' understanding of key media literacy terminology such as mis- and disinformation and their confidence in running their own media literacy sessions with young people. The evaluation findings indicate that participants have started to embed the knowledge, skills and confidence developed at the training in their work practices. For example, one SOUK participant suggested that they had used the concepts learnt at

the training in lessons in their classrooms and had spoken to their students about their internet use at home, other participants reported initiating tricky conversations on online safety with the children and young people they worked with.

“Young people have responded positively to my starting a discussion on their digital engagement and safety. They seemed so relieved to be able to explore this complex area. In one situation, I actively asked a young person who suffers from an eating disorder about the ways she engages with digital media that might be beneficial and/or harmful, and she was so pleased I initiated a discussion on this specifically.” **(stem4 workshop participant)**

“I also feel I can use what I have learnt in supervisions and when supporting staff to ask the correct questions. I feel more aware of picking up on things that staff can follow up.” **(stem4 workshop participants)**

I will be looking to extend and update age-related signposting through the school environment” **(stem4 workshop participant)**

“I was able to have a conversation with a client on their social media usage - and the short vs long term effects of social media usage.” **(stem4 workshop participant)**

“I’ve shared with my colleagues, and we have put together a plan of how we are going to share the information, including with volunteers.” **(Internet Matters workshop participant)**

“[We plan to]... put [these learnings] into our internet safety policy, over the next three months.” **(Internet Matters workshop participant)**

The training delivered by the organisations has also influenced practitioners’ thinking on how to better support young people’s media literacy.

“In future I will be asking students to consider the validity of information rather than preaching to them” **(SOUK workshop participant)**

“Before the training I wouldn’t have discussed the relevant issues with young people as much... these subjects are important to discuss” **(SOUK workshop participant)**

“What this course has underlined for me is the importance of engaging and engaging positively about the digital world for the young people I work with despite the often very negative narratives I hear from many parents and teachers who would like to shut it down. **(stem4 workshop participant)**

“Having done this training, I have a stronger sense of the importance of engaging around tech. It’s also increased my confidence as it has made me re-think assumptions about what my young people understand and that they know so much more than me.” **(stem4 workshop participant)**

“It's not about me understanding absolutely everything out there, all the platforms. It's about how am I going to teach our young people to become confident in keeping themselves safe.” (**Internet Matters workshop participant**)

“I now have a much better understanding of media literacy and the support that can be offered to students” (**stem4 workshop participant**)

Evaluation methodology

All the projects used a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to assess the difference that their projects had made. Quantitative approaches involved pre and post surveys to help assess the distance travelled in the knowledge and skills acquired by the participants as a result of the training. The qualitative approaches looked into exploring, in more depth, their experiences in general of the training, and in some cases how they had applied their knowledge and skills at their work settings.

Evaluation lessons learned

- **Dunning-Kruger Effect¹** – one project reported a high baseline of self-reported media literacy skills in their surveys with participants overestimating their ability, thus indicating limited progression – the project felt using multiple assessment methods beyond self-reported data could have addressed this challenge.
- **Approaches such as a theory of change or an evaluation framework can support evaluation work.** It was not clear the extent to which practitioners' evaluations had been informed by a Theory of Change or an Evaluation Framework to help frame the indicators used, which were at times not sufficiently clear, to make judgements on the impacts they were planning to measure.

Ofcom's tips for evaluating and assessing impact

- To prevent research fatigue, and a potential Dunning-Kruger Effect, consider using post programme surveys that combine before and after questions to facilitate completion of surveys.
- Offer incentives to encourage participants to complete programme surveys and to boost response rates.
- Use Theory of Change and Evaluation Frameworks to help frame and focus your evaluation and to shape the indicators you want to measure.

¹ Dunning-Kruger effect, in psychology, a cognitive bias whereby people with limited knowledge or competence in a given intellectual or social domain greatly overestimate their own knowledge or competence in that domain relative to objective criteria or to the performance of their peers or of people in general (<https://www.britannica.com/science/Dunning-Kruger-effect>)

Conclusion and next steps

This report identifies a number of areas to be considered when designing and delivering media literacy training for practitioners across a range of sectors. It focuses on recruitment, design and delivery as those are the areas where the pilot organisations had to innovate the most given the challenges facing the professionals they were working with.

Common issues relate to how best to engage professionals with demanding workloads and little time for training, and how to sell media literacy workshops to them when the terminology is unfamiliar. But while the issues were similar, responses differed depending on the workforce and the delivery method with each project hitting on bespoke strategies that worked for them.

This project has informed further Ofcom work on media literacy delivery. In February we published findings from a mapping exercise to see where [Ofcom's media literacy outcomes](#) were covered in teacher CPD training already. Our work found that training teachers to develop the more active, creative aspect of media literacy was a significant gap.

As a result we commissioned an existing teacher training course from Common Sense Media (CSM) and asked them to boost their training and cover these outcomes. The project is due to complete next year and we will report on the findings and share our next steps in this exciting and important work. We know training professionals is a sustainable way forward and we are pleased to have supported the training of over 1700 people. The work is not done and we are exploring other ways to train the rainbow of professionals that support children and young people to make the most of their online lives.