

Ofcom's Making Sense of Media Advisory Panel

Minutes of meeting, 25 April 2023, 14.00 hrs - 16.00 hrs

Attendees:

Panel Attendees: Yih-Choung Teh (Chair) (Ofcom), Iain Bundred (YouTube); Carolyn Bunting (Internet Matters); Emer Cassidy (TikTok); Laura Ellis (BBC); Sophie England (Meta); Richard Graham (stem4; South London and Maudsley Mental Health Trust); Tim Judge (National Literacy Trust); Cliff Manning (Parent Zone); Aida Ndiaye (Meta); Glen Tarman (Full Fact)

Panel Observers: Declan Shaw (Department of Science, Innovation, and Technology - DSIT)

Other Ofcom Attendees: Dame Melanie Dawes; Julian Ashworth; Claire Levens; Alison Preston; Fay Lant; Kate Morris; Megan Dunn; Natalie Mawhinney; Ines Leroyer; David Swanson

Apologies: Laurie Bailey (Panel Observer, Department of Education); Sonia Livingstone (London School of Economics and Political Science); Caroline Millin-Brawn (Tik-Tok); Georgina Powell (Sentient Digital Consulting); Claire Thwaites (The LEGO Group); Jo Twist (UK Interactive Entertainment)

Item 1: Opening Remarks from Melanie Dawes

- Melanie Dawes presented a brief overview of media literacy duties at Ofcom.

Item 2: Break-out discussions

- Panel members split into two break-out groups to discuss the skills, behaviours, and knowledge needed to display high-functioning media literacy.
- **Discussion Points from Group 1** - with Alison Preston as break-out room chair:
 - Internet users should be able to take preferable actions when encountering disinformation.
 - How people develop in these three broad areas is often shaped by the actions of those around them.
 - These three broad areas of skills, behaviours, and knowledge should not be taken in isolation – they all directly relate to each other, and it is important to remember this when developing and actioning policy.
 - Critical thinking and critical literacy are very different things – and this should be recognised.
 - Users having knowledge of online services is not enough – media literacy should be 'outcome-focused', and about empowering users to achieve certain actions.
 - Teaching children how to manage their screen time and advising them about how algorithms work is a critical foundation of high functioning media literacy for young people.
 - Taking a behavioural led approach to media literacy makes it much easier to adapt to the requirements of changing technologies.
 - It is important to remember that different demographics of society will require different approaches to ensure a high level across all three of these areas – with the most prominent example being the differences between parents and their children.

- It would be beneficial to establish a 'hierarchy of needs model' regarding what is most needed to display a well-developed media literacy.
- The behavioural led approach may be the most practical way to approach creating a basic framework of media literacy standards.
- **Discussion Points from Group 2** - with Claire Levens as break-out room chair:
 - Behaviour is the most important of these areas – this gives users an 'intentioned' focus to media literacy. The group came to consensus on this point.
 - All three areas are relevant and reaching basic standards across each is important. However, the weight of which they are applied will differ across generations.
 - Research suggests that anonymisation doesn't have a large impact on tendencies to post offensive comments – people will say how they feel regardless of whether they are identified or not.
 - The importance of intent was noted, and that critical thinking can be weaponised to spread misinformation.
 - Those spreading mis and dis information are actively using media literacy skills.
 - Disengagement with news and current affairs can come from feeling powerless, and one way to tackle this is to direct people towards local news or issues where they feel they can have some agency.
 - There is a need to take both an on- and off-platform approach to building skills.
 - The importance of empathy as a key aspect of media literacy was mentioned and having an understanding of the consequences of actions on others.
 - A question was raised as to whether young people are more interested in the 'display of self' online – a lot of research suggests that this is generational.
 - It was suggested that there are probably fundamentals that everyone should have at any age, such as knowing where to go to find help.
- **Actions from both break-out discussions:**
- This feedback will be used to guide our forthcoming qualitative research.
- This feedback will also be used to guide our thinking on 'what works well' regarding media literacy – to further inform our ability to promote the benefits of being online.

Item 3: AOB

- Ofcom have published our Mental Health and Media Literacy report. [You can view it here.](#)
- Ofcom's Immersive Technology and Future Tech research will be published in Summer 2023.
- Ofcom will be hosting our annual Making Sense of Media Nations Tour in June 2023 – with events held in Exeter, Dundee, Belfast, and Bangor (Gwynedd). [Panel members are invited to register here for the events.](#)
- The next MSOM Panel meeting is scheduled for the 12th September 2023.