

**December 2019**

Although the evenings are now cold and dark, there was a real buzz at Ofcom's *Making Sense of Media* Networking event last month. There was plenty to talk about, from encouraging news literacy during the UK general election, to shifting the power balance between the public and technology – keep reading to find out more about what was discussed and how you can get involved in the next Networking event.

Thank you to everyone who sent in updates for this *Making Sense of Media* December bulletin. Judging by the volume of submissions, it's clearly been a really busy few months since the last bulletin. In these updates we aim to bring together the latest media literacy news, research, initiatives and events from a range of experts and organisations, both in the UK and internationally. Submissions are organised in alphabetical order and inclusion here does not imply endorsement by Ofcom.

The bulletin also summarises Ofcom's *Making Sense of Media* work, including details of how to get involved in our upcoming events.

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## Ofcom activity

### *Making Sense of Media* Network Social Event:

On 18th November, over 50 of you joined us for our inaugural network social event and there was plenty to talk about!

Catherine Miller from Doteveryone discussed the think tank's work exploring what it would take to engage the public with responsible technology and to tip the scales of power between the public and technology; Alina Dimofte talked about Google's wide range of initiatives to improve media literacy in schools and elsewhere; while Will Moy from Full Fact talked about their work encouraging news literacy during the UK general election. It was great to have the chance to meet so many people working in the media literacy space, and to share ideas and experiences.

## *Making Sense of Media* advisory panel meeting:

Ofcom's [Making Sense of Media Advisory Panel](#) met for the third time on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> November. Attendees provided updates on recent work, and we discussed a range of ideas about how to develop the network, including the evaluation of initiatives.

The panel comprises 12 expert representatives from across industry, academia and the third sector, who meet regularly to debate and help inform the overall direction of Ofcom's online media literacy programme.

## Upcoming *Making Sense of Media* events:

### **Tuesday 4 February, 8:00am, Central London**

Ofcom will be hosting a breakfast meeting to launch our latest Children's Media Literacy research. We'll be covering the findings from the latest wave of our long-running survey, the longer-term trends over the last five years, as well as showcasing our ground-breaking Children's Media Lives video evidence. For more information and how to register to attend please see [link](#).

### **April 2020, Belfast**

We'll be hosting our next Children's research event in Belfast in April 2020. This will be an opportunity for us to share Ofcom's latest children's research findings with Northern Irish media literacy stakeholders and hear from nations stakeholders about their work. More details will be provided in our next bulletin, or you can contact our [Belfast office](#).

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## **Latest Research**

### **BBFC rating symbols introduced to on-demand services – [BBFC](#)**

[Research commissioned by the BBFC](#) found that over half of teens (56%) are wary of watching content on the internet as they are not sure that the content is suitable for them and say they want clear age ratings to guide them.

The BBFC's new digital classification symbols, launched on Thursday 31 October, will help young people to make conscious decisions when it comes to film and content on video on demand platforms. Netflix and Amazon Prime have begun to use the BBFC rating symbols on their content.

### **Monetisation is where online gaming starts to look less like 'play' and more like gambling; a new report '[Gaming the System](#)' - [The Children's Commissioner](#)**

This report examines the experiences of children aged 10 to 16 who play games online, exploring the positives and negatives of online gaming and the impact of monetisation. The report also makes policy recommendations including: limiting the role of real money in children's games; more help for children to manage their time; and improving children's digital citizenship, by being kinder online.

In a study spanning three and a half years, [DitchtheLabel](#) uncovered 1.5 million transphobic comments amid the wider conversation around transgender people

DitchtheLabel is a digital anti-bullying charity. It has recently released two research studies: the first exposes the scale and extent of [transphobia on social media](#) and the other, its [Annual Bullying Survey](#), looks at prejudice-based attitudes in young people across the UK.

Doteveryone explores what it would take for people to be both engaged and empowered in shaping their experience with technology

[Doteveryone](#)'s report, [Engaging the Public in Responsible Technology](#) identifies four principles that underpin public engagement in a digital age. It suggests that the public should not be expected to shoulder the burden to tackle digital challenges alone, and that action from government and industry is needed to ensure the public have the right support as they navigate a tech-enabled world.

Nearly seven in ten 11-16 year-olds think devices get in the way of family communication, reveals the latest research from [Family Kids and Youth](#)

FK&Y's latest '[Wellbeing and the Internet](#)' research shows that 67% of 11-13 and 69% of 14-16 year olds believe that 'Sometimes using devices can get in the way of my family talking to each other'. The ongoing research includes peer-to-peer focus groups and 1,000 interviews with 7-16 year olds.

Girls want to have happier and safer lives online, finds the [Girlguiding](#) survey of girls' attitudes to media

The 2019 Girlguiding [Girls' Attitudes Survey](#), now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year, reveals some of the pressures associated with being online; nearly half (45%) of girls and young women aged 11-21 feel they need to check their phone first thing in the morning and last thing at night. However, it also highlights some of the positive effects of being online; three in ten 11-16-year olds say using social media makes them feel happy. The report covers what girls and young women aged 7-21 think and experience in different areas of their lives, including the media, education, bullying, play and the environment.

Reports on how regulation can improve the internet and how to make internet actors accountable, from the [Internet Commission](#)

The Internet Commission's [Policy brief on Internet Regulation](#), responds to the relevant policy and research debates, focusing on issues of transparency, procedural accountability, and corporate behaviour and responsibility, including a duty of care. In addition, its paper entitled, *"Restoring Trust in The Digital Environment Through Independent Evaluation. A Regulatory Approach Towards*

*Evidence-Based Digital Responsibility*”, elaborates on and theorises on the Internet Commission’s evaluation methodology. It will be initially submitted to the Working Paper series of [LSE’s Department of Media and Communications](#).

### Exploring the motivations behind sharing fake news- [Online Civic Culture Centre](#) at [Loughborough University](#)

Established in 2018 with an award from Loughborough University’s Adventure Research Programme, the Online Civic Culture Centre (O3C) applies concepts and methods from social science and information science to understand the role of social media in shaping our civic culture. O3C’s most recent report [News Sharing on UK Social Media: Misinformation, Disinformation & Correction](#), establishes the motivations behind sharing fake news and some of the identity traits of the groups most likely to share fake news.

### How children and parents talking can increase media literacy - [NewsWise](#)

Recent [research](#) from the National Literacy Trust, commissioned by NewsWise, shows that while children prefer talking about fake news with their family rather than friends or teachers, many are missing out on the opportunity to do so. The research also revealed that half of UK parents are worried about the impact of fake news and misinformation on their children’s lives and don’t think their children have the skills to spot it.

In response to this challenge NewsWise has started a UK tour of family news festivals to give children and parents new and exciting opportunities to explore news together. In their new workshops, families work together to navigate the news and explore topics such as bias, rumour, clickbait, manipulated images, truth and trustworthiness and become ‘Fake News Detectives’. NewsWise will be running family workshops across the UK from November onwards. To find out more follow them [@GetNewsWise](#).

### Using embedded techniques can increase digital skills, reveals research from [One Digital](#)

The digital inclusion programme One Digital has published in-depth case study-led research that said that companies can help their customers improve their digital literacy by including some advice and training in day-to-day interactions. The research has been published on the [One Digital website](#).

### Research on screen time, gamers, the digital divide and disinformation- [Oxford Internet Institute](#)

A new Oxford Internet Institute study has found that a moderate use of screen time can be good for your health: [Screen time study](#).

Research project finds that there is nothing clinically ‘wrong’ with obsessive gamers: [Obsessive gamers study](#).

New Oxford Internet Survey finds that the majority of internet users have a positive experience online, but there is potential for the digital divide to widen with non-users resolutely avoiding the Internet: [OXIS final report](#).

Recommendations for collective action needed now to tackle the spread of disinformation in public life: [OXTEC final report](#).

## The Rip-Off Games: How the new business model of online gaming exploits children – [Parent Zone](#)

Parent Zone's report '[The Rip-Off Games](#)' found that children are being enticed not only to keep on playing, but to keep on paying. Three quarters of the children and young people, who play online games regularly, say that they try to get them to spend money all the time, and almost half (49%) say that online games are only fun when they're spending money.

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## Events

### January

#### [Student conference](#) exploring fake news and media regulation from Young Citizens, January 2020

In January [Young Citizens](#) will host a [student conference](#) exploring fake news in the media and how it relates to young people. During this session, around 100 students will be supported to understand key information about the media and how it is regulated. The conference will also look in detail at how the media has changed, and the ways that students can identify bias in reporting or fake news in the information they access.

### February

#### [Safer Internet Day](#), Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Registration is open to be a supporter of the 2020 Safer Internet Day which is taking place on Tuesday 11 February. Schools and organisations are now able to [register as Safer Internet Day Supporters](#) to share what they are doing for the day. In 2019 [over 2,100 organisations registered their support](#); this and the activities that took place across the UK made 2019 the biggest UK Safer Internet Day yet.

### March

#### [Internet Commission](#) Workshop, Thursday 19 March 2020

Workshop on ethical business regulation convened by the Internet Commission and the International [Network for Delivery of Regulation](#), hosted by the [Copenhagen Center for Social Data Science](#).

## April

### Conference on Information Literacy, Manchester Metropolitan University, Monday 6<sup>th</sup>- Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2020

LILAC, the Librarians Information Literacy Annual Conference, is one of the major international events focused on information literacy. The conference is open to all, and takes place on 6-8 April at Manchester Metropolitan University.

### Media Education Summit, Leeds, Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup>- Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020

Conference Theme: Media Education, Diversity and Voice

Each year the Media Education Summit brings together a global network of researchers, educators and practitioners working across all aspects of media education, media and digital literacy and media / technology in education. The event is the leading global showcase for research, pedagogy and innovation on all aspects of media education. A panel will be convened by Internet Policy Review, on the theme of digital literacy.

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## Projects and initiatives

### Increasing analytical thinking to combat fake news - [Ask for Evidence](#)

[Ask for Evidence](#) is a campaign set up by [Sense about Science](#). The aim of the campaign is to get people to evaluate and explore the claims they come across in their daily lives. Recently, Ask for Evidence has developed a free [Evidence Hunter activity pack](#) that gives young people the skills to critically evaluate the claims they meet online, in advertising and from celebrities.

Find more information about Ask for Evidence [here](#).

### Collaborating to tackle disinformation - [BBC](#) and partners

*"Disinformation and so-called fake news are a threat to us all. At its worst, it can present a serious threat to democracy and even to people's lives."* Tony Hall, BBC Director-General

Over the last few months the BBC has deepened the commitment to tackle misinformation, announcing [a new industry collaboration](#) with global technology firms and news organisations.

A joint online media education campaign will form part of the collective action to inform all audiences, not just young people.

In September the [BBC "digital wellbeing" Own It app went live](#) offering children a helping hand to develop positive habits when using their first smartphones. Using AI, it evaluates a child's mood and offers appropriate advice and support in their digital life.

Ahead of the General Election the [BBC's Reality Check service](#) is playing a key role fact-checking claims, and the BBC's first Digital Election Reporter, Joe Tidy, has a specific focus on the digital campaigns being run by the parties and the vital [role social media will play](#) in the election.

[BBC Young Reporter](#) continues to help 11-18 year olds navigate news with a programme of [free online materials](#) specifically supporting critical thinking skills. Working in partnerships with schools, colleges and youth organisations, the initiative engages with thousands of young people across the UK, empowering young people to tell their own stories and develop media skills and news literacy, particularly in the digital space. Want to get involved or find out more? Register [here](#) or contact [youngreporter@bbc.co.uk](mailto:youngreporter@bbc.co.uk)

## Resources offer advice to children on how media literacy can stop them seeing age-inappropriate content - [BBFC](#)

In a new initiative this year the BBFC, working with the PSHE Association, launched [a new KS3 teaching resource](#) in September encouraging media literacy both on- and offline. The resource, *Making Choices: Sex, Relationships and BBFC Age Ratings*, helps students explore the impact of viewing different types of relationships in the media, make effective choices about the content they view, and resist pressure to watch something they don't want to.

The lessons promote risk assessment, decision-making, self-regulation, resilience and media literacy. It ties directly to the [new PSHE curriculum](#) and guidance, and offers focus for teachers on regulation, the use of age ratings on and offline, public consultation and opinion regarding media consumption, and the law. Additional activities on online safety were created by OnlineMediaLaw.

## Empowering everyone with the digital skills they need today to help build their tomorrow – Skills for tomorrow, [BT](#)

In October, BT launched its new [online portal](#) as part of the 'Skills for Tomorrow' programme. The programme is backed by a commitment to provide 10 million people across the UK with digital skills training by 2025, whatever their age and starting point. The portal features a range of training courses, resources and activities to give parents and children more confidence in using digital tech and help bring digital skills thinking into the home.

## Workshops to help young people think critically - [The Charlotte Project](#)

The Charlotte Project delivers free news literacy and critical thinking workshops to 15 to 18-year olds. The interactive workshops are delivered by trained journalists from Thomson Reuters and are designed to give students some tools to help them work out what's truthful and what isn't. More information is available on their [website](#) and their [Facebook page](#). This school term they have also delivered workshops to Brunel University's Urban Scholars [programme](#).

## Privacy toolkit to promote children's digital understanding - [Children's Data and Privacy Online](#)

The [Children's Data and Privacy Online](#) project has developed an [online privacy toolkit](#) to promote children's understanding of the digital environment and support them to make good decisions about their data and privacy online. Funded by the Information Commissioner's Office, grounded in an

evidence review, and developed with the participation of children, the toolkit is aimed at children of secondary school age, with resources also for parents and educators, and recommendations for policy makers and industry. Check out our [project report](#) and [final presentation](#)

## New accredited training to improve digital skills amongst employees – [Digital Unite](#)

[New CPD training to improve digital literacy](#) amongst staff has been launched by digital skills provider, Digital Unite. As research shows that half of employees (53%) don't have the digital skills needed for work, the online training turns staff into Workplace Digital Champions who can go on to support their colleagues. The e-learning comes complete with a range of workplace resources including over 40 how-to guides on Microsoft Office.

## Input for Digital Citizenship education wanted - [Common Sense Media](#)

[Common Sense Media](#) established a charity in the UK this summer and they are currently seeking feedback from teachers on their free, research-backed, and fully updated [Digital Citizenship curriculum](#). Teachers can earn up to £150 in Amazon vouchers (feedback required by end of term Dec 2019). For more information, contact [Jenna](#)

## Resources for teachers to deliver comprehensive lessons on how to combat bullying based on gender identity- [Ditch the Label](#)

Ditch the Label has launched a campaign that gives teachers the resources they need to deliver comprehensive lessons on how to combat bullying based on gender identity. Resources on this issue are freely available on the Ditch the Label website. The campaign specifically focusses on Digital Literacy and has been developed in conjunction with [tumblr](#).

## Discussing the ins and outs of misinformation for young people - [Digital Life Skills](#)

Shelby Metcalfe, the Founder and Director of Digital Life Skills, gave a [TEDx talk](#) on the consequences of the spread of misinformation in the digital age. She highlights the dangers of not adequately educating children on the dangers of getting news from the internet, why people are susceptible to fake news and how viewing fake news can increase its prominence. She also offers advice on how you can avoid fake news on your social media.

## News Literacy Framework – [Burnet News Club](#)

The Economist Educational Foundation has set up a framework that gives teachers the resources to be rigorous in defining news literacy and measuring students' progress. News literacy is the central focus of the framework, which means having strong critical thinking and communication skills, and

possessing the knowledge and confidence needed to apply these skills to the news. More information on the framework and accompanying resources can be found [here](#).

### Ensuring employees have the digital skills for the future - [Future.now](#)

In a joint venture between the Lord Mayor's Office, Accenture, BT, the Good Things Foundation, Lloyd's Bank and Nominet, companies sign up to commit to training their staff in the digital skills they will need for the future. The scheme also reaches out to the less digitally skilled, such as the unemployed or older people, to extend the training to these groups too.

### News, video editing and coding skills for schoolchildren - [Guardian Foundation](#)

The Guardian Foundation [Education Centre](#) runs daily news, video editing and coding workshops for [primary](#) and [secondary](#) schools at the Guardian Offices at Kings Cross. [Here](#), you can find a blog post written by a teacher who attended one of these workshops with her class.

### Tools for journalists to adequately report statistical data - [IMPRESS](#)

IMPRESS has worked with the Market Research Society to produce a piece of ethical media guidance titled '[Using Polls and Survey Data](#)', to provide journalists with the tools they require to report on statistical data responsibly. They hope this is a useful resource for all stakeholders interested in ethical reporting on research and polling during elections. They have also launched a short public consultation on the guidance, and welcome responses on how they can improve and refine it for practitioners.

### New hubs offering parents advice on fake news and hate speech- [Internet Matters](#)

Internet Matters have created some new hubs on their [website](#) which provide parents with insight and top tips around: fake news and online hate speech.

They worked with Professor William Watkin from Brunel University on fake news and misinformation - and how parents can help their children think critically about what they see online. The hub can be found [here](#).

They are in the processes of creating a new hub covering online hate speech - you can find their expert Q&A [here](#).

### Helping young people understand the commercial link between social influencers and the brands they're promoting - [Media Smart](#)

In July, [Media Smart](#) launched an influencer marketing education campaign and resource, aimed at helping young people understand the commercial link between social influencers and the brands they may be promoting. Backed by the ASA, it is the first of its kind to tackle this area of marketing and features popular youth influencers (like Hannah Witton) who volunteered their time to create

short videos talking directly to 11-14-year olds, explaining what influencer marketing is, why brands use it and its regulations.

The resource can be found on their [website](#). For more information contact [Rachel Barber-Mack](#)

### Increasing news literacy in schools- [News UK](#)

The Times and Sunday Times have created News Literacy resources that have been used by over 250 schools across the UK. News UK has also launched a campaign alongside The Sunday Times' Parent Power list, which identifies the top schools in the country. They will be targeting these schools with their news literacy resources. In January, News UK will be launching an accreditation for schools which complete their course of lessons and demonstrate an improvement in the news literacy of the schools' students.

### The Student View receives Global Youth & News Prize - [Student View](#)

The [Student View](#) is an initiative that was set up to increase media literacy with teenagers and combat disinformation. The [Global Youth and Media award](#) honours organisations that innovate as they strengthen engagement between news media and young people while reinforcing the role of journalism in society.

### Helping teachers to improve media literacy education - teaching and learning with [Twitter](#)

Working in conjunction with UNESCO, Twitter has created a resource for teachers to try and improve media literacy education. The resource has been developed with teachers offering input. This resource is for educators who want to design lessons around media and information literacy and how it relates to global citizenship and digital citizenship education. Whether your focus is on media and information literacy (MIL) or nurturing good online habits, or other social competencies, there'll be something here for you. The terms educators and classroom are used in the broadest possible sense — much of the content will be as useful to parents as it is for teachers.

The resource can be found [here](#).

### Digital Resilience Framework- [UK Council for Internet Safety](#)

In September the UKCIS Digital Resilience Working Group launched a [Digital Resilience Framework](#), for organisations, policymakers, schools and companies to use to embed digital resilience thinking into products, education and services. It includes a checklist for different content, services, environment and policies.

## Schools and Local businesses working together to increase media literacy - [Young Citizens](#)

[Media Experts in Schools](#) was created by the charity [Young Citizens](#) in partnership with long-standing corporate partners, [FTI Consulting](#). The programme aims to improve young people's media literacy and resilience by partnering businesses with local schools to provide communication professionals with the opportunity to volunteer in the classroom.

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## International

### News and projects

#### New government-run website to help Australians stay safe online – Australia

A website has been set up by the Australian government that is a resource centre for information to help Australian citizens stay safe online. The website contains advice for parents, resources for schools and a link where you can report online abuse. An article about the website can be found [here](#). The website itself can be found [here](#).

#### New website for the association of Media Literacy – Canada

The [Association for Media Literacy in Canada](#) has launched a [new website](#) where you can keep up to date on all the events, initiatives and news to do with Media Literacy in Canada. The Association continues to provide professional development through various activities, as well as online projects such as [EULAs](#) (End User License Agreements), which translates the terms and conditions you agree to before you click agree.

### Reports summarizing tactics used to combat disinformation globally

'[Report of anti-disinformation initiatives](#)', by the [Oxford Technology & Elections Commission](#) and the Oxford Internet Institute, written by staff at BBC Monitoring. This summarises the state of play in combatting disinformation and fake news in a range of countries.

'[Disinformation Annotated Bibliography](#)' has been

created by academics at the University of Toronto. It is a comprehensive description of initiatives around the world, covering areas such as creation and dissemination, social media, advertising and marketing, and cognitive science.

## Co-operation and networks

### European media regulators meet to discuss media literacy and online platforms – [European Platform Regulatory Authorities](#)

The EPRA Media Literacy working group met for the second time this year. EPRA's focus on this area demonstrates the growing importance of media and information literacy activities for media regulators.

On this occasion, regulators were joined by Google and Facebook to discuss media literacy projects – with a focus on actual or potential collaboration in this area. The group heard about two campaigns in Norway (modelled on Be Media Smart in Ireland) and [Catalonia](#). Both focused on tackling disinformation, and in Norway specifically during local elections, and both involved close cooperation with local media, online influencers, platforms and broadcasters – there was much to learn about such multi-stakeholder initiatives.

Regulators have also launched a discussion thread via the EPRA website, as there is growing appetite to discuss, share experiences and ask for advice from this community.

As a reminder, [EPRA](#) is a network of European media regulators, comprising over 50 authorities from 47 countries. EPRA meets twice a year to exchange best practices and information, and if there is interest among practitioners in connecting with the network and regulators active in this area, they should contact [Maria Donde](#) from Ofcom

### [Media Literacy Ireland](#) Autumn meeting in Dublin – Ireland

On 1 November, the Irish media literacy network met for its Annual Autumn Conference and AGM. MLI is one of the most developed networks in Europe and has already delivered a successful media literacy campaign [Be Media Smart](#) in 2019. It will be launching a website where people can find resources and connections.

The conference elected three new members of the Steering Group and heard reports about the range of activity in 2019 by the network and individual members. It also focused on thematic issues, in this case Media Literacy, Information and Journalism, and featured case studies from innovative projects run by MLI Network members, including the launch of a guide for teaching media literacy launched by Twitter and UNESCO and several schools projects giving Irish Transition Year students the opportunity to experience working with a range of new and traditional media.

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