

Community Voices in Online Media Literacy

Online media literacy is first and foremost about people – what they do online and how they do it. It's about inclusion, participation, connection. It's about people doing the things they want and need to, online, in a safer way. Online media literacy skills, like offline literacy and numeracy, are unevenly spread across the population - with many people confident and flourishing online, and far too many either not connected or not confident, and not flourishing. And many of those cohorts are at present underserved by the media literacy sector in the UK, with few resources and opportunities to learn in an environment that suits them.

As we identified in our [Approach to Media Literacy](#) document published in December 2021, Ofcom intends to support the media literacy sector by commissioning initiatives to serve specific cohorts in communities recognised as having particular media literacy needs. In order to do that well we wanted to understand what works in community skills programmes including and beyond media literacy. We conducted interviews and focus groups with staff (and in most cases, service users) of ten organisations across the UK. We found excellent examples of best practice by these organisations in delivering education initiatives to communities.

This research took place between January and March 2022 with the aim of identifying what makes an effective learning or skills-based intervention. We have [distilled our learning](#) into seven best practice principles and corresponding recommendations on how to approach the delivery of educational programmes at a local level. The thread holding these principles together is flexibility - of provision of delivery and crucially of funding. The activities that we commission will be primarily targeted at underserved communities – those not currently well provided for by existing resources and interventions. They are by definition likely to be more challenging to engage and more expensive than working in the mainstream community. Our activities will be pilots, designed to explore what works and be honest about what hasn't done as forecast. Each project that we commission will be evaluated, and those insights shared to build up our common knowledge of how to do this effectively.

Ofcom can only do this through partnerships with organisations trusted by the communities we seek to engage with. Our first job is to reach these organisations and share our commissioning plans. We recognise they may not be regular followers of Ofcom's social media channels or frequent visitors to our website. So we are delighted to be kicking off that work this week through a series of in person events in Cardiff, Manchester, Edinburgh and Belfast.

Our research has underlined that communities, whether forged through location or common experience, require relevant solutions and must therefore be involved in creating and delivering them. In essence, the community needs to teach itself, and the commissioner's role is to create the right conditions for that to happen. That's our ambition and we look forward to working together to deliver on that ambition.