

Mid-term Evaluation of Ofcom's Three-year Media Literacy Strategy 2024-2027

SUMMARY REPORT

July 2026

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Ofcom Foreword

This document is a summary of an independent evaluation of Ofcom’s three-year Media Literacy Strategy. As we are half-way through implementing this strategy, it represents a ‘mid-term’ evaluation.

Our first three-year [Media Literacy Strategy](#) was published in October 2024. The Media Literacy Strategy, which is delivered by Ofcom’s media literacy team within the Making Sense of Media (MSOM) programme, sets out three central pillars in its programme: Research, Evidence and Evaluation; Engaging Platforms; and People and Partnerships. It describes our approach to supporting people across the UK to navigate their online and media content safely, critically and with confidence, and provides a framework for delivery and evaluation.

Ofcom has statutory duties to promote and research media literacy in the 2003 Communications Act. This includes duties that the Online Safety Act 2023 (OSA) further clarified and added specificity to. Under Chapter 8 of the Act, Ofcom is required to publish a Media Literacy Strategy and to report annually on the delivery of its media literacy functions. We also have duties to assess our progress towards achieving the objectives and priorities set out in our Media Literacy Strategy. We provide a summary of our work each year in Ofcom’s Annual Report, supplemented by our Media Literacy Delivery Plan.

We commissioned this independent mid-term evaluation of our three-year strategy for several reasons. First, evaluation is a core component of our Media Literacy Strategy. It supports a wider understanding of what works and helps us assess the impact of projects and interventions and identify gaps in delivery. Second, we will use this evaluation as we deliver the second phase of the Media Literacy Strategy to identify areas that may be useful to focus upon or modify – some of which we are already acting on. It will also act as a valuable input into our planning for our next three-year strategy. Finally, we have aligned this evaluation with Ofcom’s annual reporting and consider that it fulfils our obligations to report annually on the delivery of our media literacy functions.

We recognise that evaluation is a continuous and iterative process. It is not a pass-or-fail exercise; rather, it requires an assessment of both successes and areas where evidence of progress has been more limited. This, in turn, enables learning to be applied and improvements to be made. In publishing this report, our aim is to support Ofcom’s own culture of learning around the evaluation of media literacy delivery and to develop lessons that can be shared with others to improve the effectiveness of existing and future interventions.

The evaluator commissioned by Ofcom used evidence from a range of sources in this evaluation including 33 interviews with relevant stakeholders, and two surveys sent out to our Network of over 700 individuals or organisations. We are very grateful to those who have contributed to this process. We continue to encourage engagement with us through our [MSOM Network](#) (Media Literacy Network) and other means: our aim is to “make media literacy everyone’s business”, and in order to do this we welcome feedback and comments to help refine our work and our future strategy.

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About the author

This summary report was written by Jim Barratt of Bigger Picture Research, a consultancy providing evaluation and research services since 2006.

Ofcom commissioned Bigger Picture Research to design and conduct this mid-term evaluation of the three-year Media Literacy Strategy. Previously, the author was contracted by Ofcom's media literacy team as an evaluation advisor between 2023 and 2024.

All assessments in this report are independent and represent the evaluator's view after weighing the available evidence, unless stated otherwise.

Acknowledgments

The evaluator would like to thank everyone who contributed to this research by giving their time and sharing insights and feedback. This includes stakeholders who agreed to be interviewed, MSOM Network (Media Literacy Network) members who completed surveys, and Ofcom staff and contractors who provided data and took part in group debrief meetings.

Executive summary

Ofcom published its first three-year Media Literacy Strategy in October 2024. This independent mid-term evaluation assesses progress over the first half of the strategy period (October 2024 to February 2026), drawing on stakeholder interviews, survey evidence, Ofcom Media Literacy team reflections, monitoring data and a review of published reports

Overall assessment

The evaluation finds that delivery of the Media Literacy Strategy (also referred to in this report as ‘the strategy’) is broadly on track and that stakeholder sentiment towards Ofcom’s approach is largely positive. In terms of the outcomes set out in the strategy, the evaluation finds that there is strong performance in particular areas such as evidence-building through research and evaluation activity, and in convening the sector in various ways.

Importantly, most activity is still underway, and intended outcomes are not yet fully observable. Assessment at this stage is therefore focused on direction of travel, rather than final impact.

Workstream	Outcome	Indicative summary of mid-term assessments
Research, Evidence and Evaluation	Increased use of Ofcom research evidence for policy developments & activities	Good progress
	Better understanding and measurement of media literacy	
	Deeper understanding of ‘what works’ for delivery of media literacy interventions in relevant sectors	Some good progress
Engaging Platforms	Better media literacy support for users provided by platforms and broadcasters	Limited evidence of progress at this point
	More evaluation of the effectiveness of that support for users	
	Media literacy initiatives are better funded in the long-term	
People and Partnerships	Educators and other priority workforces are better able to deliver media literacy skills	Some good progress
	More people have access to the skills and support they require to navigate content and safely flourish online	
	Media literacy is a greater priority for a broader range of organisations and sectors	

‘Good progress’ = Evidence from multiple sources indicates the strategy is working as intended in this area and the outcome is likely to be achieved over the life of the strategy.

‘Some good progress’ = There is credible evidence of positive change, but progress is partial or at an early stage.

‘Limited evidence of progress’ = There is currently insufficient evidence of intended change. Outcomes may not yet be observable on the available evidence, or Ofcom’s contribution may not yet be apparent.

Overall, the promotion of media literacy emerges from various evidence sources as a shared endeavour, with Ofcom playing a key catalytic and coordinating role. Stakeholders see Ofcom’s independent regulatory function as both enabling (underpinning Ofcom’s convening role as an honest broker with leverage) and constraining (it has legally bounded relationships with services it regulates). The report concludes with recommendations for Ofcom to consider in the latter part of the strategy period, aimed at enhancing delivery, addressing gaps and strengthening outcomes based on the evidence gathered and analysed for this evaluation.

1. Introduction

Ofcom published 'A Positive Vision for Media Literacy', its first three-year Media Literacy Strategy, in October 2024, following extensive public consultation. The strategy sets out how Ofcom intends to fulfil its media literacy duties with activity organised in three complementary workstreams: Research, Evidence and Evaluation; Engaging Platforms; and People and Partnerships

This mid-term evaluation charts progress to date and sets out emerging evidence of Ofcom's contribution in the context of wider developments. The period under review covers activity delivered between October 2024 and February 2026. Guided by an evaluation framework, and supported by three levels of data collection and analysis, the evaluation was designed to address the following areas:

PROCESS	IMPACT	STRATEGY
What is working well? Where can refinements and adjustments be made?	Early evidence of outcomes (distance travelled to date)	Are underlying assumptions supported by experience?
<i>Useful for Ofcom to continue refining the three-year programme of media literacy work while it is underway</i>	<i>Useful for developing Ofcom's evidence base for summative impact evaluation</i>	<i>Useful for informing the development of Ofcom's strategic plans for media literacy beyond 2027</i>

Evidence sources

The evaluation employs a mix of methods which includes qualitative testimony from a sample of 33 key stakeholders, systematically collected, analysed and reported, alongside quantitative output data, commissioned project reports and survey evidence.

Primary research conducted by the evaluator	Secondary research conducted by the evaluator
• 33 interviews with stakeholders, conducted anonymously to promote open engagement • six group meetings with Ofcom staff and contractors to inform the process evaluation • a survey of MSOM Network members, conducted in two waves via an online questionnaire in January 2025 (sample size = 80) and January 2026 (sample size = 52)	A review of existing data and evidence sources held by the MSOM team, including: • Event feedback survey data • Research, Evidence & Evaluation Working Group minutes • Internal reporting • MSOM Network membership records • MSOM Network Bulletins

How to read the evidence in this report

Much of the primary research evidence reflects what people and organisations say about their experiences of Ofcom's work, rather than independently measured outcomes.

- The stakeholder interviews involved purposive sampling to achieve a mix of perspectives across the three workstreams, UK-wide geographical representation and different levels of engagement with Ofcom's media literacy activity. As participation was voluntary, there is a risk of self-selection bias and findings should therefore be interpreted as reflecting the perspectives of more engaged stakeholders.
- The MSOM Network survey sample was not random, and response rates were modest (baseline survey =12%, follow-up survey =7%), meaning findings should be seen as indicative rather than statistically representative;
- As this is a mid-term review, many programme activities are still underway and their longer-term effects are not yet fully visible.
- Some outcomes are more straightforward to evidence than others. While a range of data sources and stakeholder engagement has been used, certain types of activity

are more complex to measure, with fewer external-facing outputs even while much preparatory work has been carried out.

To mitigate these limitations, evaluation assessments are based on a balanced view of the consistency and strength of stakeholder perspectives, considered alongside other evidence sources and the wider policy and regulatory context. Unless stated otherwise, all assessments in this report are the evaluator's.

The classifications in the table below are used to summarise progress, reflecting the strength and maturity of available evidence. The assessment framework focuses on identifying the direction of travel, instances of course-correction by the MSOM team and opportunities for further refinement and development. The mid-term evaluation does not include an analysis of whether initiatives have succeeded or failed, as such an assessment would be premature.

On this basis, the available evidence supports assessments of **good progress**, **some good progress** or **limited evidence of progress**. This reflects both the early stage of delivery and the monitoring evidence used by the MSOM team for internal reporting and review, which suggests that while there are some challenges, implementation of the strategy remains broadly on track.

	Interpretation at the mid-term point
Good progress	Evidence from multiple sources indicates the strategy is working as intended in this area and the outcome is likely to be achieved over the life of the strategy.
Some good progress	There is credible evidence of positive change, but progress is partial or at an early stage.
Limited evidence of progress	There is currently insufficient evidence of intended change. Outcomes may not yet be observable on the available evidence, or Ofcom's contribution may not yet be apparent.

2. Research, Evidence and Evaluation

This workstream is designed to strengthen the media literacy ecosystem by generating high-quality insights and ensuring they are widely used

What is working well

- Large-scale surveys and longitudinal research are widely respected, used and cited by stakeholders;
- Strong support among stakeholders for planned activity to improve sampling and intersectional analysis;
- Evaluation Toolkit and Outcomes Bank are commonly cited by stakeholders as useful sources, and endorsed by the Government's Media Literacy Action Plan;
- Stakeholders value the variety of Ofcom channels for sharing research and updates;
- Co-creation methodology, used to deliver the mis/disinformation research to a high standard, is popular with stakeholders.

Outcome 1:

Increased use of Ofcom research evidence for policy developments & activities

Overall assessment

The mid-term evidence points to **good progress** towards this outcome, with scope to extend use more broadly

Supporting evidence

Stakeholders consistently describe Ofcom's work as robust and authoritative, with examples of its use including to inform other research activity, project planning, advocacy, curriculum and resource development, and in funding bids

The [Media Sense of Media Network](#) survey indicates high levels of satisfaction with Ofcom's media literacy research, particularly its robustness, credibility and relevance.

Nine out of ten respondents were satisfied with:

Robustness and
credibility of
Ofcom research

94% (48/51)

Usefulness
of reporting

94% (48/51)

Relevance
to their work

86% (44/51)

Stakeholder interview evidence generally judges Ofcom's core media literacy research to be methodologically robust, independent and trusted.

Regular engagement with Ofcom's media literacy research is evident among a majority of MSOM Network respondents, with six out of ten using it every couple of months or more often (31/52 = 59%). At the same time, engagement among the remaining four in ten respondents remains more intermittent, indicating scope for further extending use of the research.

Stakeholders named several of Ofcom’s topic-based research projects as useful over the last year, including studies examining child financial harms, the ‘manosphere’, and Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) content.

For example, the Research, Evidence and Evaluation workstream strengthened the evidence base on child financial harms, helping to build on work prioritising users’ media literacy on platforms by promoting best practice. The research delivers on Ofcom’s aim to explore “how persuasive design features could lead to potential financial harms for children,” providing insights that can inform better design and support more informed user engagement. External feedback signals its impact, with one NGO stakeholder noting that it “validated our programme”, adding that “[...] to have a body like Ofcom invest [in this research] is fantastic.”

Ofcom publications are well represented in major public policy documents, indicating high level influence

Ofcom’s media literacy research and publications are cited extensively in recent policy documents (reviews, reports, briefing documents and consultations) published during the mid-term evaluation period. Notable examples include:

- ‘Growing up in the online world: a national conversation’, DSIT (March 2026). Cites three Ofcom media literacy research publications.
- ‘Curriculum and Assessment Review, Building a world-class curriculum for all: Final Report’ (November 2025). Cites three Ofcom media literacy research publications.
- ‘House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee, 3rd Report of Session 2024–25: Media literacy’ (July 2025). Cites eleven Ofcom media literacy research reports and publications.

What could be continued, refined or developed further

Usability: Some stakeholders noted that analysis framed around key policy questions would strengthen the usefulness and relevance of some Ofcom research, such as the annual tracking research, with clearer discussion of what the findings mean for specific policy debates and decisions.

Discoverability and accessibility: Some stakeholders felt more should be done to make research visible and accessible to a wide range of users. According to some stakeholders, the open data source approach is considered helpful for those with skills and capacity, but not suitable for everyone.

Outcome 2:

Better understanding and measurement of media literacy

Overall assessment

The mid-term evidence points to **good progress** towards this outcome, with the prospect of further advancement in the latter part of the strategy period as the refreshed tracker research rolls out

Supporting evidence

Survey and stakeholder interview evidence indicates broad agreement that Ofcom research helps to shape user understanding in specific and important ways

The follow-up MSOM Network survey found that most respondents agreed their knowledge and understanding of media literacy had improved over the last year, and MSOM activity played a role in this:

Eight out of ten respondents agreed their knowledge and understanding had improved **85%**
(44/52)

Seven out of ten respondents agreed Ofcom's media literacy work improved knowledge & understanding **71%**
(37/52)

Many stakeholders agreed that Ofcom research has helped to clarify problems and trends, including around emerging issues and developments, and provides legitimacy and evidence to funders, policy-makers and partners when making the case for media literacy support.

Stakeholders strongly support the refreshed approach to the annual tracker research, with clear backing for work underway to develop more inclusive sampling, increased subgroup reporting and intersectional analysis

Most stakeholders explicitly welcomed efforts to improve representation of different sub-groups within the research. Several also cautioned that representation should not just be a matter of sampling, and that analysis and reporting must make substantive use of these sub-groups to shed light on differing patterns of attitudes, behaviour and risk of harm.

What could be continued, refined or developed further

Areas of interest for greater representation in research: There was particular interest among stakeholders in greater geographic representation, and more visibility and nuance for specific groups in Ofcom's datasets (examples were given based on the groups different stakeholders are interested in, including young people from low socio-economic backgrounds, people with low digital skills, migrant and minority communities, and people with long-term health conditions).

Adding value to existing research: There is widespread support among stakeholders for more literature reviews and secondary analysis of existing sources, which Ofcom could address by commissioning studies to consolidate existing evidence, identify gaps and priority areas for further research (in keeping with its role as convenor and catalyst).

Outcome 3:

Deeper understanding of 'what works' for delivery of media literacy interventions in relevant sectors

Overall assessment

The mid-term evidence points to **some good progress** towards this outcome, with stakeholders crediting Ofcom's research and evaluation with helping to develop understanding of 'what works'. There is support among stakeholders for greater focus on synthesis, scalability and clearer guidance derived from that evidence.

Supporting evidence

There is evidence that the media literacy team has, over the last year, encouraged greater involvement and interest in evaluation among MSOM Network members, and the sharing of evaluation reporting and 'what works'

MSOM Network members were encouraged to extend and deepen their engagement with evaluation through their engagement with Ofcom publications and updates, as well as their attendance at Ofcom events, webinars, roundtables and working groups.

Eight out of ten respondents said:

Over the last year, Ofcom had encouraged them to read evaluation or research reports on media literacy produced by others

84% (42/50)

Six out of ten respondents said:

Over the last year, Ofcom had encouraged them to find out more about evaluation

64% (28/44)

Five out of ten respondents said:

Over the last year, Ofcom had encouraged them to evaluate their own activity

54% (22/41)

Around half of the MSOM Network survey respondents had shared research or evaluation findings about the impact of media literacy interventions in the last year (28/52 = 54%). Of these, six out of ten said they were encouraged to do so by Ofcom's media literacy team's work over the last year (16/28 = 57%).

Furthermore, seven out of ten survey respondents said in the last year they had shared recommendations or best practice advice about effective interventions (36/52 = 69%). Of these, seven out of ten said they were encouraged to do so by MSOM's work over the last year (24/36 = 67%).

"Ofcom has been taking a huge leadership role in evaluation"

NGO stakeholder

Although those already engaged with Ofcom's media literacy team's activity say they have high levels of understanding about 'what works', many stakeholders feel that Ofcom's work in this area has strengthened their awareness and knowledge

Eight out of ten respondents said Ofcom's work over the last year made a medium or strong contribution to deepening their understanding of 'what works' for the delivery of media literacy interventions (40/51 = 78%; 35% said it made a strong contribution).

A few stakeholders pointed to Ofcom-commissioned projects as illustrations of good practice that they look to for tailoring media literacy to local contexts, adapting content to community priorities and working with trusted local facilitators.

Bespoke support provided by Ofcom around the evaluation of commissioned projects has benefited those involved

Several stakeholders involved in commissioned projects described being supported by Ofcom to design and run their own evaluations. They used these evaluation frameworks and tools to refine delivery, document outcomes more clearly and produce stronger reports.

"I have learned a lot more about evaluation since working with Ofcom, and I feel a lot more confident. I use what I've learned with funders and [...] funding applications"

NGO stakeholder

What could be continued, refined or developed further

Strengthening the evidence base of ‘what works’: Awareness of Ofcom’s growing body of published evaluation reports was patchy among stakeholders. The evaluation evidence indicates that more could be done to raise awareness and make these accessible through different channels and networks and/or in more innovative and engaging ways.

In addition, there is an appetite for more synthesised “what works” summaries, with stakeholders noting the value of turning individual project-level learning into more generalised guidance and models that can be replicated.

For reports prepared by partners involved in commissioned projects, several stakeholders suggested that Ofcom should consider including a short “practical implications” section as standard, so users can see how findings should shape future interventions.

Peer-to-peer sharing: Some stakeholders feel more can be done to orchestrate peer-to-peer sharing of evidence and best-practice. While practitioners often feel encouraged to share their insights, many would like more deliberate and sustained structures to promote cross-sector learning.

3. Engaging Platforms

This workstream involves encouraging platforms and broadcasters to do more to promote and support media literacy, including incorporating media literacy by design, establishing long-term, sustainable funding for media literacy and improving support through evaluation

What is working well

- Widespread support among stakeholders for media literacy by design;
- Strong engagement with the consultation for the draft Statement of Recommendations;
- Broadly positive views from stakeholder interviews carried out with representatives from platforms and the tech sector about the Best Practice Principles for Media Literacy by Design (BPPs) acting as non-prescriptive guidance that supports structured self-assessment as part of a developmental journey;
- Evidence that the media literacy team has been proactive in supporting and guiding companies pledged to BPPs;
- Broadcaster engagement has enabled a focus on which aspects of broadcasters' activity and output are media literacy related.

Outcome 4:

Better media literacy support for users provided by platforms and broadcasters

Outcome 5:

More evaluation of the effectiveness of that support for users

Outcome 6:

Media literacy initiatives are better funded in the long-term

Overall assessment

Most activity against these outcomes is planned for the latter half of the strategy period, and as a result the mid-term evaluation found **limited evidence** of progress to date. The planned activity, including behavioural insights monitoring, and monitoring of the impact of Ofcom's new media literacy recommendations, will be considered in full at the end of the evaluation period.

Supporting evidence

The level of early adoption by platforms of the best practice principles was promising. Current activity is focused on development of the Statement of Recommendations

"I thought the media literacy by design work was really promising"

Academic stakeholder

Under the present voluntary arrangements, early adopters of the BPPs include some of the larger platforms and technology companies operating in the UK (Google Search, The LEGO Group, Pinterest, Roblox and TikTok), marking a positive start.

There is evidence from stakeholder interviews that the self-assessment process proved useful, highlighting examples of genuine engagement with BPPs through policy, embedded features, campaigns and monitoring, with evidence of “by design” integration. However, a review of completed assessments shows they tend to articulate activities rather than outcomes, with less evidence of formal evaluation. They have helped to show what platforms consider to be media literacy measures, but they were less focused on demonstrating impact on users.

Some academic and NGO stakeholders expressed concern about the lack of external monitoring and enforcement. There is also concern that voluntary guidance alone does not sufficiently shift incentives away from attention-driven design; and that it allows companies to claim alignment without necessarily changing core systems. However, it should be noted that Ofcom has no enforcement powers in this area, and the approach favours giving platforms the opportunity to take the most appropriate action that goes beyond simple compliance.

“A lot of what Ofcom is putting out [about media literacy] makes sense. But the thing that's hard is this accountability aspect. Enforcement of the legislation doesn't go far enough.”

NGO stakeholder

Ofcom consulted on a draft Statement of Recommendations (‘How to Promote Media Literacy’) during the mid-term period. The draft recommendations, which build on and expand the best practice principles, are organised under four high-level headings:

- Design for better user choice
- Empower people during use
- Build trust beyond the service
- Evaluate what works

It is too early to assess the impact of the recommendations on media literacy promotion, as the [final recommendations](#) were published after the period of this evaluation, and this will be covered within the end of strategy evaluation.

In addition to the BPPs and the media literacy recommendations, Ofcom’s commissioned research in persuasive design and child financial harms has informed engagement with platforms and provided some level of accountability. Additionally, it has shaped engagement with the Gambling Commission, the Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum and the Money and Pensions Service, as well as being explicitly referenced in the NGO and grey literature space, including publications by the Online Safety Act Network, 5Rights Foundation, Parent Zone, Ygam and Mumsnet.

Broadcasters hold differing views about their role in promoting media literacy. Current activity related to their role is focused on the Statement of Recommendations

Stakeholder interviews with broadcasters found that views varied about their role in promoting, supporting and evaluating media literacy activity, and evidence of differing approaches.

As noted in 'Transmission Critical: The Future of Public Service Media' (July 2025), Ofcom talked to a range of broadcasters and found that they engaged in three broad types of media literacy activity, aligned with their channel target audiences:

- Direct delivery (online or in person, live lessons/ workshops etc.)
- Online resources (including quizzes and teaching materials/ learning materials)
- Content in programming (e.g. programmes that explore media literacy themes, or through high quality journalism, fact checking etc.)

The draft Statement of Recommendations sets out how broadcasters can promote media literacy. The impact of the recommendations in relation to broadcasters will be covered within the end of strategy evaluation.

Changes in the level and duration of funding for media literacy interventions by platforms and broadcasters remain unclear on the available evidence

Very limited evidence of the level and duration of funding for media literacy promotion and support by platforms and broadcasters was available to the evaluation.

What could be continued, refined or developed further

Work is already underway to expand the approach to media literacy by design through the Statement of Recommendations (the [Media Literacy Recommendations](#)).

Platforms and BPPs: The evidence of this mid-term evaluation supports the proposed move towards ongoing monitoring of online services using behavioural insights research, independent of the platforms, to drive awareness and implementation of the recommendations.

Broadcasters: Ofcom will continue to engage with broadcasters to understand approaches that will work best for them and their audiences, and stakeholder testimony supports this approach. The stakeholder interviews found that the broadcast landscape and business models are varied and under pressure, suggesting there is no single, straightforward way to drive up support for more, and better evidenced, media literacy provision. Because there are currently no enforceable media literacy obligations on broadcasters, Ofcom's likely influence continues to rest on its convening power, informed by evidence.¹

This evaluation concludes that Ofcom's continued use of research, tools and partnership brokering to catalyse future developments, as set out in the Media Literacy Recommendations, is likely to make the most effective contribution to outcomes 4 and 5.

Funding models: The challenge surrounding long-term, sustainable funding remains and it is unclear, based on the available evidence, what funding platforms and broadcasters can contribute to support media literacy. Therefore, the evaluation suggests that further evidence is needed on the level and duration of funding over time.

¹ Looking ahead, the newly published Green Paper and public consultation on UK media ([Watch this space: a new strategic direction for UK media](#)) proposes a new legal duty on Public Service Media providers to develop and report on media literacy strategies.

4. People and Partnerships

This workstream involves a collaborative model that works in depth by commissioning and supporting skills-building interventions in priority areas and by sharing what works. It also operates more broadly by encouraging engagement with media literacy across a wide range of sectors

What is working well

- Evaluation of commissioned projects shows evidence of the positive benefits of media literacy support and activity for those taking part;
- Commissioned projects have also legitimised media literacy as a strategic activity among participating organisations and across a range of sectors, improving case-making to funders;
- Development of the Community of Corporates (involving a range of corporate and other partners from a wide variety of different sectors) and work with football clubs holds the promise of scalable activity;
- Encouraging signs and valuable lessons from work with local authorities and governments in home nations;
- A combination of Ofcom's convening role and its outreach activity are helping to broaden the agenda around digital inclusion to include other aspects of media literacy;
- Participation in advisory panels, Community of Corporates, roundtables on AI and other topics, and events, has signalled to organisations that media literacy is a shared, cross-sector priority, raising its profile on internal agendas;
- The MSOM Network continues to grow and diversify.

Outcome 7:

Educators and other priority workforces are better able to deliver media literacy skills

Overall assessment

The mid-term evidence points to **some good progress** towards this outcome, with a synthesis of existing 'train the trainer' evidence providing self-reported data about professional development learning outcomes and identifying useful lessons for future initiatives, along with mapping work looking at media literacy in existing teacher CPD training.

Supporting evidence

Existing action research and mapping work provides a firm evidence base for commissioned activity working with educators and other priority workforces over the three-year strategy period

A synthesis of evidence from a previous round of commissioned projects using a 'train the trainer' model with professionals working with children and young people, published by Ofcom in September 2025, found promising results from this approach ('What Works in Delivering Train the Trainer Interventions?').

Ofcom also published findings from a new mapping exercise to see where Ofcom's media literacy outcomes were already covered in teacher CPD training ('A Teachable Moment:

Opportunities, Gaps and Next Steps from our Review of Media Literacy Training for Teachers’).

The work found there was a lack of training for teachers to develop the more active, creative aspects of media literacy and the report made several key recommendations to address this and other gaps. Informed by the mapping work, Ofcom subsequently commissioned Common Sense Media to deliver a digital citizenship and media literacy pilot project across the Southwest of England (although the project was completed in March 2026, it is too early to report progress at this point).

What could be continued, refined or developed further

Measuring confidence levels: Confidence measures are one important evidence source for this outcome. The ‘what works’ report notes an important methodological caveat relevant to confidence findings, with evidence that some participants may have overestimated their confidence levels prior to the training.

The report recommends using a variety of assessment methods beyond self-reported data, including using post-programme surveys that combine before-and-after questions to address this issue. On this basis, it is worth Ofcom considering applying the report recommendation for all future train-the-trainer projects.

Outcome 8:

More people have access to the skills and support they require to navigate content and safely flourish online

Overall assessment

Early evidence points to **some good progress** towards this outcome. A fuller picture of the outcomes and impact of commissioned projects will be better known by the end of the strategy period, along with evidence from new partnership work with football clubs and outputs from the Community of Corporates.

Supporting evidence

Evaluation reporting by commissioned projects provides evidence of media literacy skills development and insights into what types of support are most effective

Ofcom commissioned a wide range of targeted projects providing direct media literacy support, training and development during the mid-term period:

- Red Chair and Guardian Foundation are delivering the Untold Stories programme, working in areas of financial disadvantage to help children, young people and older adults spot mis- and disinformation and build understanding of the role of local news.
- Parent Zone is delivering the Informed Voices programme to help support young people, particularly first-time voters, in navigating online content relating to elections across the UK.
- PK Porthcurno and Libraries Unlimited are working with museums and libraries in the south-west of England to deliver media literacy through museum-based and library-based activities and exhibitions, such as workshops and the “Fake News?” exhibition, that help people of all ages build skills to critically understand information and recognise misinformation.
- Refuge is delivering a project to support media literacy for women who are victims and survivors of domestic abuse (‘Building Confidence and Control: Media Literacy and Victims/Survivors of Domestic Abuse’)

- Common Sense Media worked with schools, multi-academy trusts (MATs) and local authorities in the Southwest of England to engage with media literacy and deliver digital citizenship training.
- Place-based work, where local experts build on the existing offer in their community and embed media literacy into local digital strategies and/or digital inclusion offers, is ongoing in Birmingham (led by ConnectFutures and Loudmouth Education), Glasgow (led by Glasgow Life and Mhor Collective), Northern Ireland (led by the Nerve Centre and Advice NI) and Rhondda Cynon Taff (led by Cwmpas).
- Good Things Foundation have built media literacy content into its Learn my Way learning platform which reaches up to 5,000 people a month, including topics on digital wellbeing, personal information and critical thinking.

Work is ongoing and across commissioned projects that have provided interim reports, there is indicative evidence of positive effects for participants, including improved awareness, skills and confidence in navigating online content. These projects also demonstrate that well-designed media literacy interventions can contribute to shifts in attitudes and everyday practices, not just knowledge acquisition.

A review of interim reports finds that learning from the projects reiterates the value of approaches that are engaging, relevant to real-world digital experiences and responsive to the needs of different audiences. Interim reports highlight the importance of flexibility in delivery, alignment with existing systems and settings, and the need for reinforcement over time to sustain outcomes. The evidence also points to the benefits of integrating evaluation into delivery while keeping methods proportionate and accessible.

What could be continued, refined or developed further

Scalability: There is growing evidence from interim project reporting and stakeholder interviews that community-based interventions work best if they are targeted, tailored, embedded within existing networks and systems, and delivered in partnership with trusted organisations.

To avoid the appearance of fragmented provision on this basis, this evaluation recommends Ofcom consider continuing to draw together and share insights from across commissioned projects as the basis for recommendations about ‘what works in which contexts’, while incentivising delivery partners to share their learning more widely within their networks.

Going further, several stakeholders would like Ofcom to consider adopting a commissioning model supporting large-scale and longer-term projects and evaluations. The view, among some NGOs involved in media literacy activity, is one that is also noted in the report on Media Literacy by the House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee (2024/25).²

Outcome 9:

Media literacy is a greater priority for a broader range of organisations and sectors

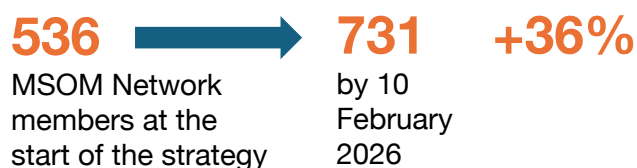
Overall assessment

The mid-term evidence points to **some good progress** towards this outcome. Ofcom’s strategy is contributing to raising the priority of media literacy in a range of organisations and sectors, although progress varies due to factors that may be outside Ofcom’s direct control (e.g. other competing priorities).

² <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5901/ldselect/ldcomm/163/163.pdf>

Supporting evidence

Membership of the MSOM Network continued to grow and diversify, which provides a useful proxy measure for increased prioritisation of media literacy by different organisations and sectors



Six out of ten members who joined during this period say they currently carry out media literacy activities in the UK, which means that over two-fifths (42%) have an interest but say they are not currently active in this space. This is indirect evidence that Network reach may be extending to adjacent sectors and interests.

One in four new MSOM Network members work in areas targeted for Network expansion

including education, health and social care, local authorities, media (including broadcasters) and technology (including platforms)

26% (49/186)

Open ended responses to the MSOM Network members follow-up survey provide evidence of ways in which Ofcom's work has contributed to prioritisation, including by informing about new developments and opportunities; supporting case-making, agenda-setting and strategic planning; and demonstrating a commitment to advocacy that benefits all those involved.

Across the stakeholder interviews, media literacy is generally described as a high and rising priority in connection with other agendas (e.g. digital skills, digital resilience, online safety, critical thinking or financial capability)

Around half of the MSOM Network follow-up survey respondents (27/51 = 53%) said MSOM's work over the last year had informed which areas they consider are most relevant to their work, indicating the role Ofcom can play in establishing the wider scope of media literacy and its relevance across different policy agendas and sectors.

According to open-ended responses to the follow-up survey, Ofcom activity is perceived as valuable in this regard for providing conceptual clarity, practical evaluation tools and up-to-date insight into the UK media literacy landscape. This supports a richer, more nuanced understanding of what media literacy is, its multiple aspects and Ofcom's own priorities.

Despite some good examples of partnership building over the first half of the strategy period, evidence supports the view that embedding media literacy in local digital strategies takes time and effort due to competing demands on local authorities

Ofcom worked with six local authorities across England in year one of the strategy, to explore how media literacy can be built into their digital strategies and digital inclusion activities. Year two will extend this reach to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Good progress is being made through partnership building, but the real impact of this work will only be realised later in the strategy period.

"[Media literacy] does need to be translated into terms that [Local Authorities] both understand, recognise and have a responsibility for."

Public sector stakeholder

There is evidence that Ofcom's convenor and catalyst role, along with new initiatives like the Community of Corporates, has enabled a wide range of organisations to think more broadly about media literacy

Stakeholder interview evidence indicates that participation in Ofcom advisory panels, roundtables and conferences has signalled to organisations that media literacy is a UK-wide cross-sector priority, raising its profile on internal agendas (e.g. within financial services, telecoms, local government and youth-sector organisations). In these cases, stakeholders are clear that without Ofcom's contribution, media literacy would sit lower in their internal priorities or would be framed more narrowly.

The midterm found that the positive and negative potential of AI is drawing greater attention, among stakeholders, to media literacy. There is some evidence that critical thinking and understanding of how platforms operate are being worked into digital competence frameworks because they are increasingly recognised as essential to how people engage online. This parallels the move by Ofcom to update its outcomes bank to include outcomes that are explicitly related to AI content. Ofcom's focus on AI also includes the inclusion of questions about its use in media literacy surveys and hosting an academic whose focus has been on researching public attitudes to AI. Some stakeholder evidence also indicates Ofcom's convening role and evidence-gathering are helping to raise awareness of AI-related issues in connection with media literacy, moving thinking beyond traditional "spot the fake" content.

Two new partnership programmes with potential for scalable activity got underway in the latter part of the mid-term review period: a Community of Corporates (which is working on a joint plan of action driven by participating companies across a wide range of business sectors) and activity with Premier League football clubs to deliver media literacy support through existing community and grassroots networks.

It is too early to assess the likely contribution of these initiatives to Ofcom's strategic ambitions, but the initial enthusiasm from participants shows the potential of this approach.

"There is something brilliant about the convening force of Ofcom to ask the question, 'Could we achieve more if we did this together?'"

Business stakeholder

What could be continued, refined or developed further

Keeping pace with developments: To future-proof its work as far as possible, and provide strategic direction, this evaluation recommends that Ofcom should continue to focus on providing principles-based guidance and models, and systems-level insights, for others to adopt and adapt to local circumstances.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

In terms of process evaluation, which deals with implementation, the mid-term evidence finds that delivery of the Media Literacy Strategy is broadly on track with strong performance in key areas such as evidence-building and sector convening

Stakeholder sentiment towards Ofcom's media literacy work is generally positive, and the media literacy programme has been responsive to external developments and new opportunities. This includes a flexible commissioning model that can meet emerging need.

Strategic programme design is working well overall, with evidence that individual activities and workstreams complement one another, providing opportunities for cross-fertilisation to help amplify impact. For example, year one place-based work in East Birmingham provided a case study of partnership work with education providers that informed thinking around efforts to strengthen relationships with education authorities and build partnerships (e.g. with Multi Academy Trusts), informing other education projects.

There are inherent implementation challenges in any multi-workstream programme that combines commissioned work, partnership activity and direct delivery, and the process evaluation found that Ofcom has largely mitigated these through well-established risk-management procedures.

In terms of impact evaluation, Ofcom is making steady progress overall towards achieving its strategic outcomes by the end of the three-year term. Importantly, most activity is still underway, and not all outcomes are fully observable yet

Stakeholder interview evidence shows that Ofcom's position as a regulatory body is an important factor in expectations about its media literacy role

The independent regulatory function is seen by some stakeholders as both enabling (underpinning Ofcom's convening role as an honest broker with leverage) and constraining (it has legally bounded relationships with services it regulates).

Finally, the evidence at this mid-term point presents media literacy promotion as a joint effort, with Ofcom playing an important role among a variety of other influencing factors including public policy development and examples of direct delivery and wider collaboration by public, private and third sector stakeholders.

Eight out of ten MSOM Network survey respondents agreed:

Ofcom's work over the last year made a moderate to strong contribution to their own media literacy activity or research

84% (37/44)

Seven out of ten MSOM Network survey respondents agreed:

Ofcom's work over the last year made a moderate to strong contribution to promoting media literacy in the UK

67% (34/51)

This evaluation recommends that Ofcom consider the following actions in the remaining term:

1. Refinements and further developments: Review the options outlined in the ‘What could be continued, refined or further developed’ sections of the workstream chapters and decide which have merit and can be adopted over the remaining term of the strategy and which could feed into planning for the next strategy.

2. Strengthening the evaluation evidence base: Review the data collection plan for the three-year strategy, addressing evidence gaps or shortfalls identified by the mid-term evaluation, ensuring the evaluation framework continues to provide a firm basis for future impact evaluation.

3. Stakeholder engagement and contribution to Ofcom’s work: There were mixed views among stakeholders about the level of openness around Ofcom’s deliberations, and some also raised the issue of ‘consultation fatigue’. The effectiveness of the strategy depends on the willingness and capacity of stakeholders to engage with, and contribute to, Ofcom’s work. To support this, Ofcom could consider ways to continue modelling good practice through:

- transparency about its own learning;
- minimising the burden of public consultation exercises (the timing and frequency of which are not always under Ofcom’s control), particularly involving smaller organisations with whom it hopes to engage (using a similar approach to the Statement of Recommendations consultation);
- and by actively feeding back how stakeholder contributions help to shape its strategy, guidance and future commissioning, within the scope of Ofcom’s duties set out in the Online Safety Act (2023).

For their part, stakeholders have a vital role to play in engaging with Ofcom’s research, participating in evaluation of the strategy and sharing credible evidence of what works in their own practice. This includes contributing learning, data and insights, and being open about challenges as well as successes, to strengthen collective understanding. This approach would reinforce media literacy as a genuinely shared endeavour, strengthen the quality and depth of the evaluation evidence available at the end of the strategy period, and support more informed strategic development beyond 2027.

4. Conditions for success: Evidence suggests that several conditions must hold for the strategy to work as intended. Ofcom can directly affect only some of these factors, but these conditions should be the focus of attention for any final evaluation that tests the underlying logic of the strategy:

- Research evidence is discoverable, accessible and of practical use to inform policy and practice;
- Evaluation methods are good enough to show change credibly, otherwise the learning loop weakens;
- Platforms and broadcasters are willing and able to engage with Ofcom’s media literacy work and adopt best practice (including the media literacy recommendations);
- The right channels are chosen to reach target audiences, and the messages/interventions are relevant enough to change behaviour;
- Partners have the capacity, capability and trust of the communities they serve to deliver interventions effectively;
- There is coordination across sectors since the strategy says success requires a joined-up effort from many stakeholders;
- A mix of wide reach, targeted depth and ecosystem change is capable of delivering impact at scale.

