

September 2021

Thank you to everyone who sent in updates for this Making Sense of Media September bulletin, a round-up of your initiatives, research, and events.

We have provided points of contact wherever possible, so that network members can contact each other, particularly if there is interest in collaboration or sharing of resources.

Each summary is included alphabetically under one of the categories below; please click on one of the quick links if you would like to go directly to this category.

A reminder that these updates are provided by our network members and reflect the views of the individual members. Inclusion here does not imply endorsement by Ofcom.

You can find [previous bulletins](#) on our website.

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Ofcom activity

Recruitment update

As we mentioned in our August update email, we are about to appoint some new roles on MSOM. We are also delighted that Claire Levens is joining us shortly from Internet Matters to co-direct our MSOM activities alongside Alison Preston. Ian Macrae (Director of Market Intelligence) now has oversight of the MSOM programme, replacing Kate Davies who has taken on the role of Public Policy Director at Ofcom.

Ofcom's role and remit in media literacy and online safety is expanding, and we are continuing to recruit into a range of exciting roles over the coming months. Roles will be based across the UK nations. Please keep an eye on our website for the [latest available opportunities](#).

Our media literacy approach

We plan to publish an overview of our approach to media literacy later this autumn, following on from the publication of the [DCMS Online Media Literacy Strategy](#) over the summer. Our publication will confirm and clarify our goals and core areas of activity.

Covid-19 news and information survey (week 76, 3-4 September)

The September wave of our online Covid-19 news and information survey of 2,000 UK participants aged 16 and over was published on Tuesday 21 September. We are now pausing the survey, although we may conduct further waves for comparative purposes in the future. Over the last 18 months, we have closely monitored the consumption of news and information about the pandemic, and people's attitudes towards it, including opinions and habits relating to misinformation.

We have detailed datasets available for third party analysis, including rolled 3-month datasets that enable analysis of differences in response by a range of audience groups including by nation and ethnicity. You can explore the [interactive data](#) on our website.

Keep in touch

If you would like more information on any of Ofcom's Making Sense of Media work or Ofcom's wider activities, please email us at makingsenseofmedia@ofcom.org.uk

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Research

5Rights

[Pathways: How digital design puts children at risk](#), a report for the 5Rights Foundation, was launched at an event in July.

This report examines how digital products shape the lives and experiences of children. It combines a detailed exploration of the platforms themselves, findings from interviews with children, and data from online 'avatars' – to provide insight into the impact of digital design on young people.

For further information, please contact ruby.wootton@revealingreality.co.uk

CO:RE (Children Online: Research and Evidence)

A recently-published report from CO:RE proposes a new CO:RE classification of online risk. The 4Cs of online risks of harm are content, contact, conduct and contract risks. The new classification also distinguishes three dimensions in relation to the nature of the risk: aggressive, sexual and values. Finally, the new classification recognises three types of cross-cutting risk – to children's privacy, their health, and their fair treatment and equal inclusion in a digital world.

See [Livingstone, S., & Stoilova, M. \(2021\). The 4Cs: Classifying Online Risk to Children. Hamburg: Leibniz-Institut für Medienforschung | Hans-Bredow-Institut \(HBI\); CO:RE - Children Online.](#)

For more information, please contact s.livingstone@lse.ac.uk

Digital Futures Commission

In June, the [Digital Futures Commission](#) published its report on the [Governance of data for children's learning in the UK state schools](#). It identified significant regulatory and implementation gaps in data processing in education contexts, and outlines potential governance and oversight options for discussion. These options range from EdTech procurement rules for schools, legally binding (EdTech) sector-specific guidance, and codes of practice and standards.

IMPRESS

IMPRESS has published its [Code Review 2020-22 - Call for Evidence Report](#). This report summarises the submissions made by individuals and organisations on the themes of: accuracy, children, discrimination, fairness, harassment, journalism online and public safety.

For more information, please contact alexandra@impressreg.org.uk

The Internet Commission

The Internet Commission's policy briefing, [Online Safety Bill and Digital Responsibility in the UK](#), was published in August. The briefing was based on the Internet Commission's Roundtable discussion "Corporate Accountability and the Online Safety Bill" co-hosted with LSE's Media and Communications in July 2021. The roundtable explored the new regulatory obligations for platforms and reviewed the opportunities and challenges for corporate accountability.

For more information, please contact hello@inetco.org

Internet Matters

Internet Matters commissioned Dr Diane T Levine at University of Leicester to consider how to define digital wellbeing within families, to better understand the connection between the ever-increasing use of connected technology and wellbeing. The [final report](#) was published this summer and it considers the relationship between digital participation across four dimensions of wellbeing – developmental, emotional, physical and social.

For more information, please contact rachel.huggins@internetmatters.org

LSE/euCONSENT

The LSE/euCONSENT published in September its report, authored by Svetlana Smirnova, Sonia Livingstone and Mariya Stoilova, on [Understanding of user needs and problems: a rapid evidence review of age assurance and parental controls](#). The report presents findings from a rapid evidence review focused on parents' and children's everyday actions, views and experiences of two child online protection measures: age assurance (service-level means of verifying the age of users with various degrees of certainty) and parental control tools (end user tools for parents to support the safety and privacy of their children online). The aim is to understand the outcomes of families' engagement with these measures and to formulate evidence-based, child rights-respecting recommendations for the future development of age assurance and parental control tools.

For more information, please contact s.livingstone@lse.ac.uk

NewsWise

The NewsWise evaluation report 2020-21 was published on 24 September, detailing the findings and impact of the programme over the past year. From 13 September, the team returned to in-person delivery of news literacy workshops in schools, alongside virtual delivery. Examples of reports produced by pupils in the [award-winning programme](#) last year can be found on the new [Guardian Foundation](#) website. Schools can [sign up to take part](#) this academic year.

For more information, please contact newswise@theguardian.org

Oii

The Oxford Internet Survey (OxIS) project has published a [series of blog posts](#) on its website. The blogs cover attitudes toward online privacy, women and online hate speech, and literacy in the digital age.

For more information, please contact grant.blank@oii.ox.ac.uk

SMILES

SMILES is an Erasmus+ supported project where six organisations from across Europe are collaborating to develop and test approaches to combat the spread of fake news. A baseline study with a description of the current situation of news and educational interventions has recently been published on the [project's website](#).

For more information, please contact a.a.j.vanhelvoort@hhs.nl

UCL: risk and resilience

Annemaree Lloyd and Alison Hicks (UCL) are leading a project entitled “Risk and resilience in radically redefined information environments”, which examines how people use information, digital, and media literacy to perceive and mitigate risk during times of uncertainty. Phase One findings of this study indicate that the 2020 lockdown transition was marked by unfolding, intensifying, and compartmentalising phases. The project is now examining increasing desensitisation to critical information, including in relation to vaccine decision-making. Please visit the [project website](#) for more details.

For more information, please contact a.hicks@ucl.ac.uk

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Projects and initiatives

The Economist

The Economist Educational Foundation has launched Topical Talk to help children talk about global issues with confidence. You can download free, weekly classroom resources for students aged 9+ designed by their team of experienced teachers working with journalists and fact-checkers at The Economist. You can [sign up](#) on the Economist Educational Foundation's website.

For more information, please contact tombigggestone@economist.com

Futuredotnow

Futuredotnow's [Hidden Middle Report](#) was published earlier this year. The report reframes the conversation around the critical gap in Essential Digital Skills in the workplace, which millions of working-age adults still lack.

For more information, please contact hello@futuredotnow.uk

Glitch

Glitch has launched [its new website](#), with resources providing information about its ongoing work to end online abuse.

You can also [subscribe to the newsletter](#).

Guardian Foundation

[Behind the Headlines](#) is the new name for the news and media programmes run by the Guardian Foundation's Education Centre. The expanded programme includes free news and media workshops for secondary schools, higher education and youth groups, guidance for young people interested in media careers, teacher training, and downloadable media literacy teaching resources. It is launching its first online Behind the Headlines Media Careers insight week on 27 September where young people aged 16-25 can explore roles that are available in media organisations and gain practical insights, tips and advice from those working in the industry, in order to take their first steps.

For more information, please contact behindtheheadlines@theguardianfoundation.org

Internet Matters

Internet Matters and Samsung Electronics UK have launched a new, co-created initiative called [The Online Together Project](#). It aims to encourage children to take part in building a positive, inclusive culture online with the first phase focusing on tackling gender stereotypes. Built for families with children ranging from 6 to 16 years old, the interactive, age-appropriate resource encourages respectful interactions online, regardless of their differences or background - it's designed to help young people develop the critical thinking skills to recognise and challenge gender stereotypes in online spaces.

For more information, please contact kay.martin@internetmatters.org

In partnership with Electronic Arts, Internet Matters launched a new campaign 'Play Together, Play Smart' this summer, encouraging parents to get familiar with the simple steps they can take to use tools to ensure their children are playing safely and responsibly. These resources were created in response to research indicating that only 42% of parents speak to their children about safe and responsible gaming and only 37% have set up parental controls.

At the heart of the campaign was a dedicated landing page full of advice and guidance for parents on how to create a safe gaming experience for their families and supported by recognised footballing legend Ian Wright and comedians Ellie Gibson and Helen Thorn, hosts of hit podcast Scummy Mummies.

For more information, please contact jo.rossi@internetmatters.org

Jubilee Centre, University of Birmingham

The [Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues](#) at the University of Birmingham is undertaking a project called [Cultivating Cyber-Wisdom](#). Defined as the ability to do the right thing online at the right time, cyber-wisdom is crucial to minimising online risks and maximising online opportunities. The Jubilee Centre's project is based on the evaluation of a school intervention, which delivers a cyber-wisdom education programme, across secondary schools in England from September 2021 to February 2022. Framed in ways that overlap with digital citizenship education, the aim of the intervention is to measure the extent to which 13-16 year-old students make wiser decisions online as a result of completing the programme. To set the scene for the intervention, the Jubilee Centre has [published a report](#), presenting the findings from two surveys that explored to what extent adolescents and parents value and act on wisdom and virtues online. A [blog post](#) about the report is available.

For more information please contact t.j.harrison@bham.ac.uk and/or g.polizzi@bham.ac.uk

Legitimate.io

Legitimate is launching this month. It aims to put a verified profile behind every piece of content. IT is the first verified content engine in the world and is currently indexing over 20,000 articles a week from over 1700 verified journalists and hundreds of publications. It wants to combat fake news and give journalists credibility and recognition for their work. Visit legitimate.io or @Legitimate_App on Twitter for more information.

For more information, please contact caoimhe@legitimate.io

Media and Information Literacy Alliance

The [Media and Information Literacy Alliance](#) (MILA) is a new cross-sector group of organisations and individuals who share a common belief in the power of media and information literacy to help people lead happier, healthier, safer, more productive lives. MILA, which will formally launch later this year, aims to provide an open platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange, and will work through advocacy, capacity-building, research and programme delivery.

SWGFL

[Report Harmful Content](#) is a helpline dedicated to the removal of harmful material online. It is launching the Report Harmful Content Button. Organisations including schools and universities who want to signpost their users to the helpline can now download a simple button on their website. From there, users can report any harmful material they may have seen or been victim to online. It's free to download and goes towards making the internet a safer place for all.

TikTok

This summer, TikTok launched its #FactCheckYourFeed campaign to equip TikTok users with the skills they need to critically engage with content, navigate the app safely, and guard themselves against potential harm. Collaborating with top creators and expert partners to promote insightful content on the app, it has produced instalments on topics including spotting vaccine misinformation, making financial decisions, identifying misleading information about diet and exercise, and improving media literacy and critical thinking skills. The #FactCheckYourFeed campaign aims to encourage the TikTok community to dig a little deeper and think a little wider.

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International

Finnish organisation for National Media Education Policy

The Finnish organisation for National Media Education Policy [published a report](#) based on qualitative interviews with a range of experts in the field, and includes their recommendations on the promotion and development of adults' media literacy in Finland. It focusses on increasing systematic planning and coordination.

SMaRT-EU

SMaRT-EU's [Social Media Resilience B-Learning Course](#) was launched this September. The course is aimed at educators that work with both young and older people and covers a variety of topics, such as fake news, awareness of virality and trending in social media, the credibility of the sources in a media context, the influence of algorithms and more. This course is free and available in English.

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