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EXPLORING CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICE IN MEDIA LITERACY: A UK REGIONAL CASE STUDY APPROACH

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April 2024

Exploring best practice and challenges in media literacy: A UK regional case study approach

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Introduction

This report presents key findings from a study, funded by Ofcom, looking at the state of media literacy policy and provision within five areas in the UK: Birmingham and the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, Scotland and Wales. These five areas were chosen because of their potential to generate meaningful policy and practical insights into the state of local media literacy provision, with a focus on digital skills development. Using a case study methodology, the research team behind this project, which includes researchers from the University of Liverpool and John Moores University, aimed to shed light on the media literacy ecosystem of each region by exploring the best practices and challenges experienced by two under-researched groups: policymakers and civil society organisations.[1]

As more and more aspects of our lives move online, it is essential that people have the skills and knowledge they need to navigate both the opportunities and risks posed by the internet. Digital technologies are useful for keeping in touch with friends and family, learning, accessing essential services like banking, and searching for jobs and information, among other benefits. However, they also present considerable risks – e.g., in the form of misinformation, scams, and cyberbullying. This is why promoting media literacy has never been so important. Ofcom (2023) defines media literacy as "the ability to use, understand and create media and communications in a variety of contexts" (p. 1). Often approached as an umbrella term, it overlaps with different types of literacy, including information, ICT, news, digital and data literacies.

In this report, media literacy relates primarily to the use of digital technologies. It is understood as incorporating not just the functional skills and knowledge required to use these technologies, but also – just as entailed by the concept of critical digital literacy (Polizzi, 2021) – the ability to critically evaluate online content and the broader digital environment (i.e., how internet corporations operate, and the potentials and limitations of the internet for society).

In the UK, Ofcom (2023) has found that many people lack the media literacy skills they need to evaluate online content and protect their own privacy. It follows that there is an urgent need for large portions of the UK population to develop media literacy skills. In 2021, DCMS published the Online Media Literacy Strategy outlining challenges for civil society organisations delivering media literacy initiatives, including a lack of long-term funding opportunities, a lack of coordination within the sector, the challenge of building the public's resilience against misinformation, and the difficulty of targeting hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations.

While children could be more easily reached through formal education, current media literacy provision for different adult populations remains patchy in the UK and relies primarily on the work of civil society organisations offering media literacy opportunities to different communities. However, UK adults' take-up of media literacy provision and training by such organisations is low and issues of distrust in institutions and the government only make this problem worse (Behavioural Insights Team et al., 2023).

While some recent research has looked at the challenges experienced by media literacy organisations in the UK (Edwards et al., 2023), most research so far has focused on the needs and different levels of media literacy in the general public. However, if we are to improve media literacy across the UK,

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[1] We advise that this report is considered alongside a larger report (D'Arcy et al., 2024) presenting findings from a parallel study (funded by the British Academy and conducted by the same research team) that focused on the same populations and the state of digital inclusion provision within the same five regions in the UK.

then it is important to gain a deeper understanding of the role that both policymakers and organisations play, and what best practice looks like, in the context of promoting and delivering media literacy provision within their region.

Methods

To explore the media literacy ecosystem of each selected region, we conducted 18 semi-structured interviews with policymakers and organisations from across the regions.

Table 1: Number of participants interviews by area

	No. of policymakers	Acronyms used for analysis	No. of civil society organisations	Acronyms used for analysis
Birmingham / West Midlands	1	PM1	4	CSO1, CSO2, CSO3, CSO4
Greater Manchester	1	PM2	1	CSO5
Liverpool City Region	1	PM3	2	CSO6, CSO7
Scotland	2	PM4, PM5	2	CSO8, CSO9
Wales	1	PM6	3	CSO10, CSO11, CSO12

The interviews were transcribed and thematically analysed to look for commonalities and overarching themes. Preliminary findings were presented and workshopped at an in-person event, which was held in London on 27th October 2023.

Case study 1: Birmingham / West Midlands

Policy landscape and local strategies

To date, no specific policy documents about media literacy have been produced by local government bodies in Birmingham. However, in 2021 Birmingham City Council published "Connecting our communities and enabling a digital Birmingham: **A digital inclusion strategy** and action plan for the citizens of Birmingham". This document makes reference to the importance of developing *digital literacy* among the citizens of Birmingham, while also setting out aims for 2021-2023. These include creating a joined-up approach to tackling digital exclusion, providing access to digital devices and affordable connectivity, and "giving people the right skills and knowledge to understand" and navigate the "increasingly complex [digital] landscape" (Birmingham City Council, 2021, p. 2). To promote digital literacy provision, the strategy outlines a plan for tackling digital exclusion, including increased collaboration and better coordination between the council and partners from different sectors (e.g., public, industry, civil society) in order to avoid duplication and fragmentation of provision. As part of the strategy, the council provided funding for two years for a digital inclusion team to address gaps and better coordinate initiatives aimed at both tackling digital exclusion and promoting digital literacy.

Who we spoke to

CSO1 – works at a Birmingham-based organisation helping difficult-to-reach communities to engage with services, using an inter-generational model to encourage parents and children to develop digital skills through targeted learning packages.

CSO2 – works at a UK-wide organisation, with projects in Birmingham and the West Midlands, that delivers media literacy and digital inclusion initiatives primarily to older people and people with disabilities – e.g., through providing devices and drop-in sessions to help them develop basic digital skills.

PM1 – works at Birmingham City Council and was involved in their fixed-term digital inclusion strategy mapping digital inclusion and literacy provision across the city and taking a community-led approach.

CSO3 – representative of a scheme funded by a local government body in Birmingham. They worked with communities and housing providers across the city, coordinating digital inclusion/literacy activities supporting older people to develop digital skills (e.g., through training, including on online safety and how to use devices).

CSO4 – works at the library in Coventry and is a member of a UK-wide network for librarians. They deliver formal and *ad-hoc* training sessions supporting communities (e.g., refugees, asylum seekers) to be digitally skilled and included. They have worked with charities (e.g., Good Things) to provide free data and access to media literacy resources.

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Collaboration and best practice

P1 explained in their interview that, according to their 2021-2023 digital inclusion strategy, Birmingham City Council did not fund organisations directly, but helped them to find funding – e.g., from the Adult-Social-Care-funded Neighbourhood Network Schemes (NNS). At the workshop event, one participant explained that the local government is committing funding to extend their digital inclusion work. A key aim of the strategy was to bring together representatives from local networks, organisations, businesses and decision makers to talk about issues of digital inclusion and digital literacy. This is why, as discussed by P1, the council established a **digital inclusion network through which the council met regularly with multiple organisations**.

As listed in the strategy (Birmingham City Council, 2021), community partners included organisations from the public sector (e.g., Birmingham Public Health, NHS Foundation Trust, Birmingham City University), from industry (BT Group, Hyperoptic, Microsoft), and from civil society (Birmingham Social Housing Partnership, Good Things Foundation, Age UK Birmingham). Workstreams within the network focused on aspects of digital inclusion such as devices and connectivity, with two workstreams dealing specifically with digital skills development. As described by P1:

> *Each of [the digital skills workstreams] has a delivery group of community partners that come together… We have those tentacles now into the community who can filter down knowledge and information… Our role is very much to bring those organisations together and create a psychologically safe space for them to talk freely about ... what the issues are, what the impacts are, and what people's proposed approaches [are] or [to] shar[e] best practice with each other [...as well as] mistakes.*

In allowing organisations to **share knowledge and what works (or does not)** in terms of media literacy provision, the digital inclusion network established by the council in Birmingham provided a connection between different levels by linking up local government bodies with industry and civil society organisations, thus serving as an example of good practice.

At the same time, **organisations in Birmingham and the West Midlands** (i.e., people working on the ground) also **collaborate with different stakeholders** to deliver media literacy projects. As mentioned by CSO2:

> *We're working with community partners… We reach out to care, residential or a housing association or a council or a charity and work with their end users, because that's the way we kind of work at a community level to reach the people.*

It is **through forms of collaboration** that **CSO2 are able to reach their populations of interest**, which they otherwise would find difficult to access. This is especially the case as these include older people and people with disabilities, who are more likely to be digitally excluded and/or have lower levels of media literacy. Recently, **CSO2 ran an intervention in Birmingham** that was funded by the council. **Targeting people over 65 and/or with learning disabilities**, they offered free digital skills support to these populations, both in person and online, using their own network of volunteers.

CSO1 also provided examples of community partners they work with to deliver media literacy projects providing different communities with digital skills and internet safety training:

> *We work with local authority. We work with West Midlands Combined Authority. We also work with the NHS. We're working on a completely different project with the NHS at the moment, again around ... digital literacy, so that's really exciting. We also work with a number of the big telephone companies as well, like Virgin Media O2.*

Some of the training courses offered by **CSO1** are designed to **support young people and adults in Birmingham to develop**, for example, **communication and employment skills** in ways that involve the use of digital technologies. **They also created an illustrated children's book** that helps families understand the role and importance of these technologies in everyday life. In addition, they told us about many projects that were on the horizon, including one project that aimed to develop **people's ability to engage with health-related information online**:

> *At the moment, we're really busy over the summer because we've got the launch of a digital health literacy project that we're doing that starts in September. So, we're developing resources behind that [and] we've got volunteers who we need to retrain … to equip those volunteers with the skills and the resources [they need] to be able to go out and [support people in the community].*

During the interviews, participants reflected on what they thought is particularly effective in the context of delivering media literacy initiatives. When asked what works in terms of their provision of media literacy support, CSO2 explained:

> *In terms of what we offer skills-wise, through the volunteers, it's very tailored to the individual. It's often an at-home visit where someone has requested help with something in particular, and it could be skills but it could be the fact [that their] computer's running slowly […,] so it could be practical technical help as well as digital skills. But that would just be tailored to that person ... from their starting point and what they want to achieve. So, tailoring it to individuals and ensuring that you're not talking about things like 'digital inclusion' and 'media literacy' [… Instead,] you're talking about, 'what do you want to be able to achieve? Do you want to be able to phone your granddaughter, see photographs? Do you want to be able to book a GP appointment online?'*

As discussed by CSO2, avoiding technical language and jargon, while tailoring media literacy support to the specific needs of individuals, is effective in delivering media literacy provision and can therefore be seen as an example of good practice. Similarly, in order to meet the needs of the communities they work with, **CSO1 praised their use of participatory methods to co-design and co-deliver, together with members of these communities, elements of their projects**. When asked what works best in the context of their work, they said:

> *I think, for us, it's participatory, so it's including and involving, at every stage, the people we are working with, the people we are training, the people … who are coming to our classes, whether that's through a focus group, whether that's through involving them at an event, whether that's inviting them to speak to us on a one-to-one basis... Yes, that's the thing that makes us a success... You have to include the people who you are designing this product for.*

Meanwhile, **CSO4 told us that an example of good practice** that relates to their work, which involves the design and delivery of basic digital skills and more advanced media literacy sessions offered by the library where they work, **is finding ways to capture people's attention and making** these **sessions not just educational but fun**:

> *The projects which work really well are the ones which enable us to hook into local communities. The project may be around digital media literacy, but it isn't always the best to promote it as a 'digital media literacy' project… So, [for example,] we [… did] some sessions about can you recognise fake news, so almost we did it as a challenge – 75% of people say that they can recognise fake news, but when tested only 50% [really can] ... 'Are you within the 50% or are you with the 75%? So, [… we were] trying to hook in with just like a few*

> *examples [like this …], so [that] it's actually a fun piece of learning rather than sit down formal [sessions].*

Challenges

Organisations in Birmingham told us that one of the main challenges to their work and to media literacy provision is **funding**. Because this is inconsistent, **organisations often struggle with uncertainty as to where to apply for funding and what is available**. As remarked by CSO1, "our biggest challenge is funding" and, as added by CSO3, "it's not easy to find funding". Furthermore, because funding is often prescriptive (as in prescribing the type of media literacy provision that funders expect organisations to deliver,) **it undermines organisations' autonomy** and expertise in delivering provision. CSO3 explained:

> *In other sectors, you can test things, try, and fail. We're not allowed to fail as charities, ... we have to succeed or at least, you know, try to achieve the outcomes for which we applied for the funding.*

Another challenge that emerged from our interview with CSO2 relates to the extent to which **organisations may find it hard to establish trusting relationships with other organisations**. As mentioned by CSO2:

> *I think some organisations find it hard to let us in, [they're] worried that we're gonna take over, which is not our format at all. We just wanna work together as much as we can to help as many people as we can.*

This is particularly problematic when organisations collaborate with partners whose remit is not necessarily digitally focused but can provide access to specific groups (e.g., young people, people with disabilities). This means that those **partners might lack digital skills themselves**. As remarked by CSO1:

> *We're always three steps ahead of some of the organisations we're working with and certainly the Council as well, because I think skills development is very slow in a lot of these organisations... The people you're working with are still at this level and you think, 'you're my peer, you should really know about this'.*

Finally, according to PM1 **there is a need for media literacy to be more firmly embedded in the national curriculum for England**, so that children can be reached and educated more robustly across the nation. As emphasised by PM1:

> *I would like to see a lot more education ... at nursery, at primary and secondary level... I would really like to see us changing the dialogue ... around … keeping children safe online... and whilst ... we've probably got this much media literacy in our current curriculum, ...there's so much more that we can do, particularly around Key Stages 3 and 4.*

Table 2: Overview of Birmingham / West Midlands media literacy ecosystem

Relevant policy documents	Relevant network/s	Examples of media literacy projects	Examples of best practice	Key challenges
Connecting our communities and enabling a digital Birmingham: A digital inclusion strategy and action plan for the citizens of Birmingham (Birmingham City Council, 2021)	Digital inclusion network (established as part of the council's strategy), with media literacy provision being discussed as part of the network	Digital inclusion intervention, run by CSO2, targeting people over 65 and/or with learning disabilities	Establishment of digital inclusion network linking multiple stakeholders and facilitating knowledge sharing	Inconsistent, and often prescriptive, funding for organisations
		Project run by CSO1 supporting people, through resources and the help of volunteers, to learn how to navigate and evaluate health-related information online	Organisations (e.g., CSO2) collaborating with other organisations in order to access populations of interest	To establish trusting relationships with community partners
			Avoiding technical language and jargon (including terms such as "media literacy") when delivering projects on the ground	When community partners lack digital skills
			Tailoring media literacy support to the specific needs of individuals	Media literacy is not firmly embedded in the national curriculum for England
			Use of participatory methods to co-design and co-deliver, together with members of communities, media literacy projects	
			Finding ways to capture people's attention and make training/support not just educational but also fun	

Case study 2: Greater Manchester

Policy landscape and local strategies

To date, no specific documents about media literacy have been produced by local government bodies in the Manchester region. However, multiple documents have been produced in the last few years with a view to outlining strategies and actions for promoting digital inclusion and, as part of this, digital skills development across the region. Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) (2023) recently set out their "**Digital Blueprint 2023-2026**" with the key priority of removing barriers to social mobility and employment through digital skills development and joined-up public services. According to this document, one of the key enablers to the promotion of digital inclusion is "building digital skills and literacy for life, education, work and business" (p. 26), which highly depends on "informal and community learning partnerships" within "the diverse and thriving VCSE (Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise) sector" (p. 27).

In addition, Manchester City Council (2021) published their own "**Digital Strategy 2021-2026**" with a view to ensuring that, besides having the right digital infrastructure, "people [in Manchester] have the right digital skills and training opportunities" in order to thrive in the labour market and "have the confidence to fully participate in the digital world" (pp. 2, 9, 11). As part of their strategy, the council argues that "Manchester's digital skills ecosystem is well placed to continue to support [the digital skills development of the citizens of Manchester together] with universities, colleges, business and the VCSE sector" (p. 9).

Who we spoke to

PM2 – works as part of the GMCA team that lead the digital strategy for Greater Manchester. They work with organisations and stakeholders from multiple sectors that support startup innovation and digital infrastructure as well as digital skills development.

CSO5 – works at a UK-wide organisation specialising in the provision of media literacy resources for parents/carers/professionals to keep children safe online. They recently ran a project in Manchester training young people to be "digital champions" and teach digital skills and internet safety to others.

Collaboration and best practice

Local government bodies in Greater Manchester have established networks that focus primarily on the promotion of digital inclusion and bring together stakeholders from different sectors (e.g., policy, industry, civil society). Media literacy provision benefits from these networks, given their focus on digital skills development, but remains outside their official scope. As discussed by PM2:

> *We've got a **[GMCA] cross-policy team** … making sure that we are joined up as a combined authority ... and we've also got […, across] all of our ten boroughs […, a] **local leads group** that meets on a monthly basis, and the benefits of that, we've seen, are that … people are sharing resources, sharing capacity, making sure that we're bridging the gaps so that there isn't a postcode lottery [...but] residents in all boroughs are able to be supported around the same thing... The other part of joining up is around our **digital inclusion taskforce**.*

Indeed, as part of their digital inclusion agenda, GMCA set up a Digital Inclusion Taskforce in 2020 consisting of members from industry, voluntary sector, local government, health, and education/schools. Alongside this network, the Greater Manchester Mayor, Andy Burnham, also set up the **Digital Inclusion Action Network**, which specifically targets under-25s, over-75s and people with disabilities. At the workshop event, Greater Manchester was discussed as having a mature ecosystem with good leadership and coordination. This allows GMCA to avoid duplication of initiatives as being more collaborative means that stakeholders can share knowledge and examples of good practice more easily.

During the interview, CSO5 recognised the importance of conducting collaborative work with other organisations. At the same time, they explained that, especially in the context of providing media literacy resources for parents and carers, collaboration in the form of **signposting** to other organisations is an example of good practice. As they put it: "[we] do a lot of signposting to other people's work as well as producing our own [resources, thus…] recognising the good work done across the sector". The type of media literacy resources that CSO5 produce primarily aim to keep children (including vulnerable children) safe online, as well as to support parents, carers and professionals working with children. When it comes to the delivery of their resources, the use of digital technologies was praised as another example of good practice. For CSO5, this type of **delivery tends to be more effective online** as they can reach larger portions of the population. Despite acknowledging that issues of digital exclusion are at play and that digital delivery cannot reach everybody, CSO5 explained:

> *We're really focused on digital delivery […than] ground delivery... Digital delivery is really good because you can quantify it quite well. You can see who's going to what pages on your website and you can understand what's landing and what's not... We're never gonna achieve the scale we want to see by meeting people where they are on the ground. And that's where digital delivery has the power because you can reach a much bigger swathe of people digitally than you can ever do in terms of the resources needed to do on-the-ground face-to-face frontline.*

Conscious that government funding for media literacy organisations is limited, CSO5 also discussed **industry partnerships as an effective tool to disseminate their resources even more widely**. During the workshop, participants commented that funding from this sector is often more flexible and long-term than from government. While industry funding adds a layer of complexity by bringing vested commercial interests into socially driven issues, for CSO5 it has proven to be valuable:

> *[We collaborate with] the four telcos … Sky, Virgin Media/O2, BT and TalkTalk… we remain an industry-funded organisation primarily... We're proud of that in the sense that we achieve scale through our partnership... Our industry partners push out our resources widely to their consumer base.*

Challenges

Participants working in Manchester recognised **the lack of a cohesive framework for promoting media literacy** across the UK. This is not to downplay the accomplishments of those working hard in Greater Manchester to foster collaboration, deliver meaningful media literacy initiatives and create knowledge-sharing networks. However, even in a place such as Greater Manchester, which has a more developed media literacy ecosystem, participants still felt that there could be more support. During the interviews, a more overarching framework was discussed as a way to foster better coordination and communication about media literacy provision across the UK, along with a clearer

understanding of who should be doing what. The absence of such a framework means that **local policymakers and organisations tend to rely on their own frameworks**, with the risk of these operating in isolation from the task of promoting media literacy more robustly across the country. As remarked by PM2: "we've put together a framework […, which] includes making sure that we are joined up as a combined authority across all of our policy areas". However, when it comes to media literacy provision at a national level, **the lack of an overarching framework can generate** confusion among organisations, especially in terms of **duplication of initiatives**. As discussed by CSO5:

> *There needs to be some kind of demarcation of who's responsible for what, which there isn't at the moment... There should be … a national description at a national level... I think the most obvious example of that is, you know, … the fact that DSIT and Ofcom are doing incredibly similar things in slightly different ways, you know... they're even putting up very similar grants and … doing very similar research but in slightly different ways. That's not very helpful. So there has to be some kind of demarcation of responsibility. I don't know who should be responsible for what.*

Table 3: Overview of Greater Manchester media literacy ecosystem

Relevant policy documents	Relevant network/s	Examples of media literacy projects	Examples of best practice	Key challenges
Digital Blueprint 2023-2026 (Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 2023)	GMCA cross-policy digital inclusion team, with media literacy provision being discussed by the team	CSO5 ran a project in Manchester training young people to be "digital champions" and teach digital skills and internet safety to others	Establishment of digital inclusion groups and networks linking multiple stakeholders and facilitating knowledge sharing	Lack of overarching framework for promoting media literacy across the UK, which can generate confusion and duplication of initiatives
Digital Strategy 2021-206 (Manchester City Council, 2021)	Digital inclusion local leads group across boroughs, with media literacy provision being discussed by the group		Establishment of a framework for digital inclusion provision by the local government	
	Digital inclusion taskforce, with media literacy provision being discussed as part of the taskforce		Signposting to resources and initiatives delivered by other organisations	
	Digital Inclusion Action Network, with media literacy provision being discussed as part of the network		Digital delivery of media literacy resources	
			Industry partnerships as a source of funding and tool to disseminate resources more widely	

Case study 3: Liverpool City Region

Policy landscape and local strategies

To date, no specific documents about media literacy have been produced by local government bodies in the Liverpool region. However, in 2021 Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) published their "**Digital Strategy 2021-2023**", which includes a whole section on digital inclusion and outlines the importance of developing people's "digital skills [, which] are a form of basic literacy" (p. 3). Focusing primarily on the functional skills required for employability and to benefit the economy, the strategy argues that "improving digital skills, at all ages and levels, … is in turn a major national challenge, and equally critical to the LCR's post Covid-19 recovery, growth and productivity across all sectors and communities" (p. 25).

Who we spoke to

CSO6 – works at a UK-wide organisation providing support (including in relation to digital inclusion and media literacy) for adults with learning disabilities. They run a project in Liverpool, training people with learning disabilities to become "digital champions" and support others about how to stay safe online (e.g., in relation to scams, misinformation).

CSO7 – works at an organisation in Liverpool providing nationwide support for people with neurological conditions and neurodivergences. They offer training for parents/carers on internet safety. They also deliver media literacy workshops for people with neurological conditions, with a focus on how to spot misinformation and stay safe online.

PM3 – works for a UK Government department and develops media literacy policy. They fund media literacy projects across the country, including a project in Liverpool offering training sessions for women in functional/critical digital skills (e.g., basic computing skills, how to manage privacy online and spot scams and misinformation).

Collaboration and best practice

As part of their 2021-2023 Digital Strategy, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) launched their **digital inclusion taskforce** (made up of members from industry, the voluntary sector, health, and schools), which meets regularly to showcase local projects, share knowledge, and discuss collaboration. In 2023, they also set up a **digital inclusion network** for organisations promoting digital inclusion and digital skills development to share knowledge and resources. Media literacy provision is discussed as part of these initiatives, which have a primary focus on digital inclusion. Implemented by the local government, they are examples of good practice, while **collaboration is also key to the work of organisations** delivering media literacy provision within the Liverpool city region. During their interview, CSO7 explained:

> *We're always looking at what other organisations are doing… I collaborate with [name of university], they have an autism forum … and I think it's important to see what works, what is best practice for other organisations when it comes to training.*

Some of the media literacy training provided by CSO7 takes place in schools and colleges and is delivered to children with neurological conditions as well as to carers and nurses working with people affected by these conditions. This training aims to raise awareness of internet safety. As emphasised by CSO7: "my training is in collaboration with other partners [(e.g., schools)], so they're the people that want this training". When asked if there is anything that is particularly effective in the context of delivering their training, **CSO7 explained that being neurodivergent themselves makes the training they deliver more relatable** to their target audience. As they put it: "I'm neurodivergent and going up to an organisation saying 'hello, I'm a neurodivergent person … has been wonderfully effective'".

Similarly, some of the projects run by CSO6 are "primarily linked to schools" and designed to support children with learning disabilities to stay safe online. When it comes to the format of their support and the resources they use, **CSO6 employ participatory methods** (e.g., in the form of consultations) **to tailor their provision to the needs of their end users**. As they put it: "there's absolutely no point in creating, designing, or making anything that you haven't consulted with the end user about first", which is why "co-production is absolutely best practice".

Challenges

PM3 explained in their interview that it is **often difficult to discuss media literacy provision when communicating with different government departments**. On a national level, this contributes to a lack of coordination, which in turn **affects the extent to which local media literacy initiatives are part of a more cohesive endeavour**. In particular, discussions of media literacy need to tap into pre-existing agendas and be mindful of the different priorities of different government departments. As explained by PM3, the Department for Education (DfE) have an important role to play if we are to deliver media literacy provision more robustly (in ways that go beyond the efforts of civil society organisations) through formal education:

> *We know that stakeholders want us to talk to DfE more, but we also know that, to get the attention of different government departments, we need to dock into their existing agendas. You can't just go to DfE and say 'you need to do this', because they'll say, 'well, we're doing all these other things, it's not a priority for us' or 'it's not as much of a priority for us, as you think it should be'.*

Similarly, **communication can also be a challenge for organisations when collaborating with other organisations** to deliver media literacy provision on the ground. As remarked by CSO6, "why do people have to overcomplicate things? Anytime I see an organisation ... using informal language ..., I jump for joy".

In addition, government funding was discussed by CSO6 as another key challenge, both in terms of how limited this tends to be and in relation to its often prescriptive nature. As explained by CSO6, **funding calls** tend to **prescribe** the type of **media literacy provision** that organisations are expected to deliver, rather than allow organisations to exercise more autonomy:

> *When government offers funding for a project [we hate it that they usually say] we want this to be done for this money… If the government […,] a local council or a government organisation said, 'we've got £250,000, we want to reach people about improving their*

> *media literacy and … would like [to fund a...] project [...that lasts] at least two years. What could you do for £250,000?' And then all the charities could bid for it.*

Table 4: Overview of Liverpool City Region media literacy ecosystem

Relevant policy documents	Relevant network/s	Examples of media literacy projects	Examples of best practice	Key challenges
Digital Strategy 2021-2023 (Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, 2021)	Digital inclusion taskforce, with media literacy provision discussed by the taskforce	CSO7 provide media literacy training (with a focus on internet safety) for school children with neurological conditions as well as for carers and nurses working with people affected by these conditions	Establishment of digital inclusion taskforce and networks linking multiple stakeholders and facilitating knowledge sharing	It is difficult to discuss media literacy provision when communicating with different government departments, which affects the extent to which local media literacy initiatives are part of a more cohesive endeavour
	Digital inclusion network, with media literacy provision discussed as part of the network	CSO6 run media literacy projects linked to schools and designed to support children with learning disabilities to stay safe online	Media literacy initiatives for people with disabilities are more relatable when delivered by those who are also affected by the same disabilities	Communication between organisations can overcomplicate collaboration
			Co-production of media literacy training and resources with end users enables provision to be tailored to their needs	Government funding tends to be prescriptive, leaving little autonomy to organisations

Case study 4: Scotland

Policy landscape and local strategies

In 2021, Scottish Government published their most recent digital strategy titled "**A Changing nation: How Scotland will thrive in a digital world**" (p. 29). This strategy aims to achieve "world-leading levels of digital inclusion" (p. 29) and promoting "digital literacy", understood as the to "skills […required to] use technology collaboratively, to find and evaluate information, and to communicate ideas creatively" (p. 47). This document builds on a previous strategy published by Education Scotland in 2016 (i.e., "**Scottish Government strategy for digital learning and teaching**"), which focuses primarily on the benefits of using digital technology in the classroom for both teaching and learning. At the same time, this earlier strategy also highlights the importance of developing the digital skills of both educators and learners across the curriculum. However, there is an assumption in the strategy that providing access to digital technologies will naturally lead to both educators and learners to develop digital skills. Furthermore, these are framed primarily in terms of employability, the workforce, and economic productivity, with little mention of the more holistic benefits of digital skills development for participation in society and individual wellbeing.

Who we spoke to

PM4 – works at a Scottish government body as part of a digital skills team that aims to improve the skills and confidence that teachers need to use digital technologies. As part of their work, they focus on issues of online safety and offer services (e.g., webinars) for teachers through their website.

PM5 – works at Scottish Government as part of a division that covers the Connecting Scotland programme. Through this programme, they focus primarily on digital inclusion and, to a lesser extent, basic digital skills development and signposting to existing support services.

CS08 – works at an organisation in Scotland that supports disadvantaged communities, providing devices, basic digital skills training, and media literacy training in relation to online safety and misinformation. They offer drop-in sessions and have a hub where people can come for in-person one-to-one support.

CS09 – works as freelance, based in Scotland, creating media literacy materials and resources for educators and young people. They also provide media literacy training both in schools and for vulnerable populations. One of the main topics they focus on as part of their training is internet safety.

Collaboration and best practice

In 2020, as a response to the Covid-19 lockdowns, Scottish Government set up the **Connecting Scotland programme**, providing digital access through provision of devices, data and digital skills support focused on people on low incomes. Since its inception, it has grown and received additional funding, supported by Scottish Council Voluntary Organisations (SVCO), local authorities and with support delivered through third sector organisations (2021). PM5 told us that, as part of this programme, the Scottish Government has engaged in various forms of collaboration aimed at reducing digital exclusion, while also improving media literacy provision as part of this endeavour. As

emphasised by PM5: "we wouldn't be able to deliver without collaboration", which is why **the Scottish Government has undertaken a number of digital inclusion initiatives,** including a programme supporting the health and wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable in society:

> *[We] work with local authorities and through the NHS … [and we have a] health programme … which is about giving out devices and connectivity and skill support to those who are either addicted to drugs or in rehabilitation from drug use... What we've found is that it's really been of benefit and [has] actually been effective in a way to reduce drug usage and increase mental health.*

PM5 was aware of digital inclusion initiatives, such as the one above, taking place in Scotland. They pointed out, however, the **need for an overarching network bringing together stakeholders in digital inclusion from multiple sectors** in Scotland, including public, industry and civil society, in order to facilitate knowledge exchange and map provision more effectively. As emphasised by PM5: "if we bring people together who are doing things already, we can get a much better idea of what's happening". This is why, when we spoke with PM5, they were in the process of setting up a digital inclusion alliance that would perform this function across Scotland. In addition, **the Scottish Government is part of the UK-wide Technology and Digital Leaders network**, which aims at promoting the digital agenda across governments (including in relation to issues of digital inclusion and digital skills development).

Collaboration is also crucial to the work undertaken by CSO8, which focuses primarily on digital inclusion, with media literacy being part of this focus. Predominantly targeting rural communities in Scotland, CSO8 delivers provision in four key areas: devices, connectivity (e.g., data), basic digital skills support, device support. When we spoke with them, they also told us of a project that they were running, which entailed the delivery of media literacy workshops with different communities on topics such as scam awareness, online safety, and misinformation. As part of their objective of reaching different communities, **CSO8 discussed the importance of** doing so through **a referral mechanism that they set up based entirely on collaboration with other organisations and stakeholders**:

> *We wouldn't be able to [...operate] without collaboration [and] people on the ground in these areas. So, I've got a referral network of over 200 organisations... They're made up of, you know, public bodies and voluntary organisations, civil society organisations, charities, support organisations, even community groups. So, … we've actually built that referral network up across the whole of [area in Scotland].*

In the absence of a formal digital inclusion/media literacy network, **CSO8's establishment of a referral mechanism**, which essentially constitutes such a network, **stands an example of good practice**. Similarly, CSO8 pointed to the lack of an overarching framework for media literacy provision across Scotland as a motivating factor for **the creation and implementation of their own framework** during the Covid-19 pandemic, which allowed for a hyperlocal focus and also stands an example of good practice.

> *We didn't wait for a framework or guidance, we just saw the problem and figured out what we could do to help. [...Indeed,] we've never really looked for guidance from a local government or from [the national] government. We've just tried to figure out on the ground what's gonna work in our location, [...which is why] we've developed referral systems, allocation systems and outreach systems, [...and] we completely created our own framework... I think that's what's been successful for us as an organisation, 'cause we're very*

> *tailored to our region. Now, [our area in Scotland] is nothing like [another area in Scotland]. The issues they have there are nothing like what we have in [our area]. So, a national framework that didn't focus on the issues of [our area] would be useless to us.*

CSO8's delivery of digital inclusion and media literacy provision relies on "the notion that **face-to-face support is more successful and more impactful than remote support**", which was echoed by CSO9. As they put it: "what does work [in terms of media literacy provision] is … that kind of individualised approach, and people that know the people that they are working with". When we spoke with CSO9, they told us that one of their projects taking place in a major city in Scotland involved assessing media literacy initiatives and what could be done to improve provision.

While individualised support is crucial to reaching adult populations, **PM4 told us how essential it is to train teachers with a view to delivering media literacy provision to children through formal education**. Conscious that it can be difficult to find reliable sources providing quality educational resources, they told us about a potential collaboration with a Scottish Government agency producing resources that could be adapted to teach media literacy. During the interview, PM4 reflected on the possibility of **tying these resources with the guidance** produced by their own organisation for educators. PM4 described this an example of good practice aimed at better supporting media literacy education.

Challenges

The people we spoke with from Scotland recognised that one of the challenges to media literacy provision is that **it is often difficult, when communicating with different stakeholders** (e.g., policymakers themselves, other organisations or industry), **to share the same language** and find common ground in terms of understanding the nuances of how to address media literacy. As emphasised by CSO9, media literacy is "a term that has different meanings to different people", which determines how the concept may be approached and in turn promoted by different stakeholders.

Funding also remains a key barrier. As emphasised by CSO8, "third sector organisation funding is always a critical issue. It's highly competitive". This applies both to the funding required to design and deliver media literacy training and, even more significantly, to the funding required to provide devices and connectivity to a range of communities that lack digital access. As they put it: "device programmes are really hard to fund… We're spending more and more of our profits buying devices […] but are] struggling to cover costs". In addition, they described a **paradox in terms of funding being too prescriptive**. For example, an organisation receiving funding for providing devices for people with disabilities would be precluded from giving those devices to other communities in need.

Participants at the workshop also mentioned that **Scotland has a strong national digital inclusion / media literacy ecosystem in place** (with different initiatives taking place in different areas), **but** the government **is less developed** there **in terms of networks**. By contrast, in England there are strong examples of local leadership and networks (e.g., Greater Manchester), but the national level across England is less developed. Furthermore, during their interview PM4 expressed some frustration with **media literacy not being firmly embedded within the national curriculum**, emphasising that provision of media literacy education remains largely at the discretion of schools and is therefore patchy across the region:

> *I'm sure there are schools who are really well invested in it, but again, because of the nature of the way our curriculum is made and nothing's mandated […,] we can't say in the Scottish*

> *Government [...that] you must teach information [or media] literacy, and even the local authorities can't dictate to schools [what to teach].*

Table 5: Overview of Scotland media literacy ecosystem

Relevant policy documents	Relevant network/s	Examples of media literacy projects	Examples of best practice	Key challenges
A Changing nation: How Scotland will thrive in a digital world (Scottish Government, 2021)	In the process of setting up a digital inclusion alliance across Scotland, with media literacy provision being discussed as part of this	Connecting Scotland programme, set up by the Scottish Government in 2020 and providing devices, data and digital skills support focused on people on low incomes	Connecting Scotland programme, providing devices, connectivity and basic digital skills support	To share the same language when communicating with different stakeholders about media literacy
Scottish Government strategy for digital learning and teaching (Education Scotland, 2016)	The Scottish Government is part of the UK-wide Technology and Digital Leaders network	Health programme launched by the Scottish Government, providing devices, connectivity and skill support to people addicted to drugs or in rehabilitation from drug use	The establishment of a digital inclusion alliance to share knowledge and best practice	Funding, which is often prescriptive
		CSO8 run a project delivering media literacy workshops to different communities (including in rural areas) on topics such as scam awareness, online safety, and misinformation	CSO8's establishment of their own framework and referral mechanism to identify the needs (in terms of digital access and/or skills) of different communities	A less developed digital inclusion / media literacy network
		CSO9 run a project assessing media literacy initiatives and what could be done to improve provision in a major city in Scotland	Tailormade face-to-face media literacy support	Media literacy is not firmly embedded in the national curriculum
			Tying good quality media literacy resources with guidance produced for educators	

Case study 5: Wales

Policy landscape and local strategies

Welsh Government's (2021) **Digital Strategy for Wales** has a clear focus on digital inclusion and on the development of digital skills among the general Welsh population and, especially, among the workforce. The strategy aims to "create a workforce that has the digital skills, capability and confidence to excel in the workplace and in everyday life" and to "engage with an increasingly digital world, based on their needs" (p. 8). In 2016, the Welsh Government published the **Digital Competence Framework**, which is referenced in the strategy. This framework, which is mandatory across the national curriculum for Wales, provides a typology of the digital literacy skills that need to be taught via formal education. It focuses on the development of a wide range of digital skills across four key areas (i.e., citizenship, social interaction and collaboration, production of digital content, and data and computational thinking). The framework incorporates skills that are both functional (e.g., in relation to the creation and sharing of online content) and critical (e.g., in relation to privacy, wellbeing, and online abuse) (Welsh Government, 2016).

Who we spoke to

PM6 – works in a team within the Welsh Government that develops policy for the regulation of digital technologies and services. They coordinate UK Government bills and legislation that focus on the digital (e.g., Online Safety Act) and assess the impact on Wales.

CSO10 – works at a media literacy organisation based in Wales that works with young people. Through partner organisations (e.g., youth clubs), they deliver digital skills training programmes and/or informal/drop-in sessions to young people (e.g., on internet safety).

CS011 – works at an organisation that specialises in the use of digital technology in education. They provide media literacy support, both online and face-to-face. They deliver digital skills training for teachers as well as courses for young people aimed at improving both their information evaluation and media production skills.

CSO12 – works at an organisation that runs digital projects with young people and other civil society organisations. They deliver training for young people (e.g., in terms of digital skills and internet safety). They also provide organisations with support (e.g., to create better digital services and overcome digital challenges).

Collaboration and best practice

As part of their digital strategy, the Welsh Government funds a digital inclusion programme called **Digital Communities Wales** (DCW). Led by Cwmpas, this programme is designed to promote digital confidence, health and well-being through the delivery of digital skills training. This is for frontline staff and volunteers within organisations so that they can learn how to use technology themselves and help others, including vulnerable groups such as older people. Besides running this programme, Cwmpass is tasked with coordinating a network set up by Welsh Government called **Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales** (DIAW). This provides a space for stakeholders from different sectors (e.g., policymakers, public bodies, industry, civil society) to meet regularly and share knowledge and best

practice into the state of digital inclusion across Wales, with media literacy being discussed as part of this network.

In addition to setting up their own digital inclusion network across Wales, **the Welsh Government is part of the UK-wide Technology and Digital Leaders network**, aimed at promoting the digital agenda across governments. This network allows members from different departments in government, including education and the digital inclusion team, to receive and share updates on multiple issues, such as those relating to policy. This represents a way to connect different departments and allow people from across government to ask questions and share knowledge and best practice, including in relation to digital inclusion and digital skills development.

Priority groups targeted by the digital inclusion team set up by Welsh Government are those traditionally digitally excluded, such as older people, Black and ethnic minority groups and people living in social housing. In the digital inclusion team, there is a focus on developing people's basic digital skills. The team works closely with Ofcom, Citizens Advice and BT, who sit on the Digital Inclusion and Skills Programme Board. During the interview, PM6 told us that, as part of their work aimed at coordinating UK-wide legislation about digital technologies within the Wesh context, they are regularly "in touch with colleagues from the other devolved nations". In addition, they keep in contact with Ofcom Wales to discuss "what plans they have on … media literacy [in Wales]".

As emphasised by PM6, **the establishment of formal networks is an example of good practice** inasmuch as these allow different organisations to share insights and provide updates on their work. **Equally important**, however, **are informal discussions and regular contact with different organisations**, which allows PM6 to discuss issues of digital inclusion and media literacy, among others, in more depth:

> *The formal networks are formal in that they have specific agenda items and people will come and share any specific programmes of work or activities that [… are] coming down the pipeline. So, [it's an opportunity to …] share and showcase what they've been working on. And so the network is useful to receive higher level updates … but if we've got anything that we need to discuss on a more granular level …, then we would just get in touch directly … to discuss … in more detail.*

In terms of their involvement with some of the work undertaken by Ofcom, **PM6** explained that they **actively shared**, with relevant stakeholders in Wales, **the consultation launched by Ofcom regarding the development of best practice principles for media literacy by design**. In addition, they mentioned that the **Welsh Government is going to respond to some of the consultations launched by Ofcom in relation to the Online Safety Act**.

Collaboration is also crucial to the work of **CSO10**, which **works in partnership with organisations supporting young people** (e.g., youth clubs) so as **to access, and deliver media literacy training to, this group**. As part of one of their projects**, they trained young people in how to recognise misinformation in the media and online**, raising awareness among this group about the importance of being well-informed particularly during election campaigns. When asked to share an example of good practice in the context of their work, CSO10 explained that **the support they give young people is not limited to the training sessions that they deliver but is about building a rapport and providing support more holistically**. As they put it: "sometimes people feel uncomfortable to raise something. It's those quiet conversations… It's not the workshop. It's the things that come from that engagement and building up that relationship".

Some of the projects run by CSO11 are designed to support educators in developing digital skills and using digital technologies as part of their teaching practices. One of these projects, for example, aimed to equip teachers with the media production and creative skills necessary to produce educational videos and podcasts. In addition, at the time of the interview **CSO11 was running a project** (together with European partners including universities and civil society organisations) **designed to help young people across Europe to cope with and identify misinformation online**. During the interview, CSO11 remarked on the **importance of having an open conversation with young people** about their use of digital technologies, which they referred to as an example of good practice:

> *The most important thing you can do is to have a 'how was your online day today?' conversation because we don't talk to our kids … about what they see online, what they consume… so, just having a debrief, a face-to-face debrief about what we've read, what we've seen online, and just questioning each other, like 'what does that mean? Is that real? Where does that come from?', and just making that a normal thing to do.*

When we spoke to **CSO12**, they were running a media literacy project, working with youth clubs in order to reach young people in Wales. As part of the project, they **co-designed workshops with, and delivered these to, young people**. The workshops encouraged young people to think critically about the role of algorithms and the extent to which users can (or not) control what they see online. During the interview, **CSO12 praised the use of co-production methods as an example of good practice**, while also emphasising that **it is important that workshops for young people are designed in ways that are engaging and up-to-date**:

> *Make it engaging. Make it memorable. Make it not boring… Sometimes when you go to a workshop or you see something, some things stay with you for many, many years. And I think that's what you should strike for, rather than something that's going to be forgotten the next day. And … it's also important how ourselves keep up to date with the current trends.*

Challenges

PM6 told us that one of the key challenges they have experienced in Wales is **keeping media literacy provision high on the policy agenda amid competing priorities**, which involves communicating and collaborating with different government departments:

> *There's lots of competing priorities for, you know, which are cross cutting. We got future generations, we've got financial constraints, you got ministerial priorities. We got programme for government, we've got a frazzled overworked workforce… The point of the digital strategy is to keep it up that policy agenda and make sure that you know people maintain their enthusiasm levels both on the policy making level and [… when] deliver[ing] their services to users.*

Meanwhile, CSO11 discussed two challenges to their delivery of media literacy initiatives. One related to the **limited and short-term nature of government funding**. As they put it: "there will be funding for one- or two-year projects, and once that's done it's really hard to keep anything going". The second challenge can come in the form of **academic jargon**, which can make it hard for organisations to collaborate with academics with expertise in media literacy. As explained by CSO11: "the academics have gone off and … come back [...with a document] and ... all the feedback was [that] we have not got a clue what any of this says. We can't get past the first sentence".

Finally, **CSO10 told us that** a challenge they have experienced is a reluctance among **the youth clubs they work with**, who **do not always recognise the importance of delivering media literacy workshops for young people**:

> *[They think that] young people are getting this from school [… and that] we don't need to do anything because they are taught in school. And [it's true that] young people are kind of being taught in school, but they not having those informal conversations where they can go into detail and ask … questions.*

Table 6: Overview of Wales media literacy ecosystem

Relevant policy documents	Relevant network/s	Examples of media literacy projects	Examples of best practice	Key challenges
Digital Strategy for Wales (Welsh Government, 2021)	Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales, with media literacy provision being discussed as part of this	Digital Communities Wales, a digital inclusion programme funded by the Welsh Government and led by Cwmpas	The establishment of a digital Inclusion alliance to share knowledge and best practice	Keeping media literacy provision high on the policy agenda amid competing priorities
Digital Competence Framework (Welsh Government, 2016)	The Welsh Government is part of the UK-wide Technology and Digital Leaders network	PM6 shared the consultation launched by Ofcom on best practice principles for media literacy by design. The Welsh Government will respond to consultations on the Online Safety Act.	Informal discussions and regular contact with different organisations to discuss issues of media literacy provision in more depth	Government funding, which is limited and short-term
		CSO10 run a project in partnership with youth clubs to access, and deliver media literacy training about misinformation to, young people	To provide support to young people that is not limited to the training sessions delivered but is about building a rapport, providing support more holistically, and having an open conversation about their use of digital technologies	The use of academic jargon, which can make it hard for organisations to collaborate with academics with expertise in media literacy
		CSO11 run a project, with European partners, designed to help young people across Europe to cope with and identify misinformation online	Involving young people in the co-design of media literacy workshops delivered to this group	A reluctance from youth organisations to recognise the importance of delivering media literacy workshops for young people
		CSO12 run a project co-designing workshops with young people. The workshops encouraged young people to think critically about algorithms	To ensure that media literacy workshops for young people are designed in ways that are engaging and up-to-date	

Conclusions

This report presents key findings from a study exploring the state of media literacy policy and provision within five regions in the UK: Birmingham and the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, Scotland and Wales. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with policymakers and civil society organisations working in media literacy in each area. This was done with a view to shedding light on the media literacy ecosystem of each region, with a focus on best practice and the challenges experienced by policymakers and organisations.

Before reflecting on the key findings presented above, it should be noted that this study was not designed to provide a comprehensive overview of media literacy policy and provision within the five selected areas. Given the small-scale nature of this study and the limited number of interviews that were conducted, this report is limited to providing a snapshot of some of the key features (e.g., in terms of the establishment of networks, best practice, key challenges) of media literacy provision within each region. As such, it provides a picture of some of the initiatives that have taken place, in terms of both policy and practice, to promote and deliver media literacy provision within five areas in the UK. This picture is far from comprehensive and not intended to suggest that each media literacy ecosystem presents characteristics that are necessarily different to those of other ecosystems. The question of whether – and if so, to what extent and in what ways – some of the key findings from this study apply more broadly to different regions and the UK as a whole is one that warrants attention and should be addressed by future research conducting larger studies than this.

With this in mind, there are some interesting commonalities that emerged from the five regions. What stood out from the data collected as part of this study is that all governments across the board have actively established, or are in the process of establishing, formal networks or similar groups that are relevant to media literacy provision. These allow stakeholders from different sectors (public, private, civil society) to share knowledge and examples of best practice in terms of media literacy provision. However, some of these networks are more established, or higher in number, within some areas (e.g., Greater Manchester) than others. Across all the regions, something that stood out consistently is that all the networks and groups established are primarily concerned with digital inclusion provision, with media literacy piggybacking on these networks. This is also reflected in the policy documents and guidance produced by relevant government bodies within all the selected regions, with most documents focusing on digital skills development from a digital inclusion perspective.

Nevertheless, in terms of what is happening on the ground, participants discussed a wealth of different media literacy projects that are taking place in the selected areas. Some of these projects are designed to support young people through the delivery of training sessions (focusing, for example, on issues of internet safety and/or misinformation). Other projects, by contrast, target adult populations, including vulnerable communities such as older people, and offer structured opportunities and/or tailormade *ad-hoc* support for developing their digital skills. It should be noted that, when these projects are delivered by organisations whose remit is primarily concerned with digital inclusion, the digital skills that are often prioritised tend to be more functional (i.e., those required to use digital technologies practically) than critical (i.e., those required to navigate both the potentials and limitations of the internet for society).

Within all the five media literacy ecosystems explored above, collaboration between organisations is pivotal to the provision of initiatives and training. This may take the form of media literacy organisations delivering provision (e.g., training) in partnership with other civil society organisations that have access to target populations (e.g., see Birmingham / West Midlands, Wales). However, this

is not the only way in which organisations collaborate. Some of the examples of good practice discussed by participants in terms of media literacy provision rely on some form of collaboration. This may include, for example, seeking industry partnerships as a source of funding and effective tool to disseminate resources more widely, keeping regular and informal contact with different organisations, signposting to resources and initiatives delivered by other organisations, and the co-design and/or co-delivery of media literacy training and resources with end users.

In addition, participants discussed other examples of good practice, thus shedding further light on what they consider to be most effective when it comes to media literacy provision. Many of these examples relate to how organisations meet the needs of their target communities. For example, some organisations may do so through providing tailormade face-to-face support, while for others digital delivery may be more effective. In addition, some organisations remarked on the importance of designing training that is both educational and fun. For others, providing support more holistically goes beyond training and includes building a rapport and having open conversations about digital technologies with target groups.

Media literacy provision, however, also comes with challenges. One that was discussed consistently across the board was government funding, which is limited, short-term and often prescriptive. As for other challenges, some of these relate to communication between organisations and other stakeholders. From the perspective of policymakers, this may include keeping media literacy provision high on the policy agenda and a difficulty discussing media literacy with different government departments. As shown above, this may affect the extent to which local media literacy initiatives are delivered as part of a more cohesive endeavour. Similarly, organisations may find it hard to share the same language when communicating about media literacy with different stakeholders, with instances of communication (e.g., the use of academic jargon by academics) overcomplicating collaboration. Furthermore, organisations may find it hard to establish trusting relationships with community partners and to collaborate with partners whose digital skills may be not as advanced.

Finally, two other key challenges were also discussed by organisations. When it comes to reaching children, multiple organisations think that media literacy should be embedded more robustly within the school curriculum. What is more, they would also welcome a more cohesive and overarching framework for promoting media literacy across the UK, with a clear demarcation of responsibilities across government departments and bodies. The absence of such a framework can generate confusion among organisations as well as the duplication of media literacy initiatives. At the same time, however, some organisations have created their own frameworks and referral mechanisms to identify and better meet the digital needs of their target communities.

We hope that the findings presented here will be taken into account by policymakers and civil society organisations tasked with the design and delivery of media literacy provision across the UK. This study offers a picture of what some within these groups find effective and challenging within five specific regions of the UK. Future research is needed to build on this study and explore the nature and future directions of media literacy provision, both locally and nationally across the UK.

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