

New internet laws return to Parliament for second reading this week

- Online safety legislation protecting children will be debated in the Commons
- Comes as new plans to support vulnerable people and fight falsities online are launched
- Funding boost will help people's critical thinking online through a new expert Media Literacy Taskforce alongside proposals to pay for training for teachers and library workers

Parliamentarians will debate the government's groundbreaking Online Safety Bill which requires social media platforms, search engines and other apps and websites allowing people to post content to improve the way they protect their users.

Ofcom, the regulator, will have the power to fine companies failing to comply with the laws up to ten per cent of their annual global turnover, force them to improve their practices and block non-compliant sites. Crucially, the laws have strong measures to safeguard children from harmful content such as pornography and child sexual abuse.

Ahead of Tuesday's debate, the government is launching the next [phase](#) of its [Online Media Literacy Strategy](#). It aims to help vulnerable and 'hard-to-reach' people, such as those who are digitally excluded or from lower socio-economic backgrounds, navigate the internet safely and teach them to spot falsities online.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will spend £2.5 million to advance the plan through the next year including on training, research and providing expert advice. This includes a new Media Literacy Taskforce featuring experts from a range of disciplines and a boost to the Media Literacy Fund, which gives teachers and local service providers the skills they need to teach people to improve their critical thinking of what they see online.

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

The time has come to properly protect people online and this week MPs will debate the most important legislation in the internet age.

Our groundbreaking Online Safety Bill will make the UK the safest place to surf the web. It has been significantly strengthened following a lengthy period of engagement with people in politics, wider society and industry.

We want to arm everyone with the skills to navigate the internet safely, so today we're also announcing a funding boost and plans for experts to join forces with the government to help people spot

dodgy information online.

Thinking critically online has never been more important. There was a rise in misinformation and disinformation on social media and other online platforms during the global pandemic and the Kremlin continues to use disinformation to target UK and international audiences to justify its actions in Ukraine.

Ofcom research shows adults are often overconfident in their ability to detect disinformation and only 32 per cent of children aged 12 to 17 know how to use online flagging or reporting functions.

Forty per cent of adult internet users do not have the skills to assess online content critically and children up to the age of 15 are particularly vulnerable.

A new Media Literacy Taskforce with 18 experts from a range of relevant organisations, including Meta, TikTok, Google, Twitter, Ofcom and the Telegraph as well as universities and charities, will work with the government as part of its strategy to tackle disinformation and help hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups in society think about what they see on the web, including improving their ability to protect their data and privacy.

The taskforce will look at new ways to identify and reach people most in need of education. This could include working through local authorities or coordinating support offered by local services to roll out training.

The Media Literacy Fund will expand a pilot 'Train the Trainer' programme which ran last year to give teachers, library workers and youth workers more skills to help boost people's critical thinking skills.

New research will be commissioned to understand the root causes of poor media literacy and on the effectiveness of different methods which aim to build people's resilience to misinformation and disinformation.

The fund will have a broader scope including a focus on improving media literacy provision for people who are particularly vulnerable online – such as children or people suffering with mental health issues.

Since it launched in July 2021, the Online Media Literacy Strategy has provided £256,000 in grant funding to five organisations to adapt media literacy resources for teachers working with disabled children, run a successful awareness campaign to promote Safer Internet Day and empower LGBTQ+ young people with tools to deal with online abuse.

Nick Poole, Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) said:

Media literacy is the key to helping people lead healthier, happier and safer lives online, particularly the most vulnerable and hardest-to-reach in our society. As a member of the DCMS Media Literacy Taskforce, I welcome the breadth and ambition of this new

Action Plan, which demonstrates the government's commitment to this important agenda. As librarians and information professionals, we look forward to playing our part in bringing it to fruition.

Will Gardner OBE, CEO of Childnet International and a Director of the UK Safer Internet Centre said:

Media literacy is a core part of Childnet's work with children, young people, parents and carers, and we fully support the Media Literacy focus and work of the DCMS. This work has never been as important as it is now.

There is a great deal of work being done in this space in the UK. The government is playing an important role in helping to identify where there are gaps and where focus or learning is needed, and then supporting responses to that.

As part of the UK Safer Internet Centre, in February 2022 we worked closely with the DCMS in helping to promote the Safer Internet Day campaign to LGBTQ+ young people. We fully support the continued focus of the Action Plan, including ensuring that 'hard-to-reach' groups are supported as well as those who are particularly vulnerable online.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- The £2.5 million announced in the Action Plan today will be used to fund three projects in the media literacy programme: the Media Literacy Taskforce, the Media Literacy Fund, and a research programme. Further details about the fund and how organisations can apply will be announced in the summer.
- The Media Literacy Action Plan will complement the UK government's range of counter-disinformation measures which includes the Online Safety Bill and DCMS's Counter-Disinformation Unit, which monitors harmful misinformation and disinformation and works with social media platforms to ensure action to address it.
- The Media Literacy Taskforce will meet approximately every two months and report to DCMS ministers. The Taskforce will operate over the next three years but the composition of members will be subject to change. The members of the taskforce are:

Media Literacy Taskforce: Steering Board Members

Organisation	Representative
Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)	Nick Poole (CEO)

Organisation

Goldsmiths University and
Liverpool John Moores
University

Good Things Foundation

Google

Internet Matters

Libraries Connected

Meta

Parent Zone

PSHE Association

Social Founders Network and
Together TV

South West Grid for Learning

The Telegraph

TikTok

Twitter

University of Liverpool

Representative

Kate Morris (Programme Convenor for
Journalism) and Fran Yeoman (Programme
Leader for Journalism)

Emma Stone (Director of Evidence and
Engagement)

Rosie Luff (Public Policy Manager)

Simone Vibert (Head of Policy)

Dave Lloyd (Service Development Manager)

Sophie England (Policy Programmes Manager)

Vicki Shotbolt (Founder and CEO)

Jonathan Baggaley (CEO)

Caroline Diehl (Founder)

Ken Corish (Online Safety Director)

Ian MacGregor (Editor Emeritus)

Ben Bradley (Public Policy Manager)

Katy Minshall (Head of Public Policy)

Simeon Yates (Professor of Digital Culture)