



## Communications and Digital Committee

### Corrected oral evidence: Media literacy

Tuesday 10 June 2025

2 pm

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Members present: Baroness Keeley (The Chair); Viscount Colville of Culross; Baroness Fleet; Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill; Lord Holmes of Richmond; Lord Knight of Weymouth; Lord McNally; Lord Mitchell; Baroness Owen of Alderley Edge; Lord Storey; Baroness Wheatcroft.

Evidence Session No. 12

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Questions 248 - 289

### Witnesses

**I:** Baroness Jones of Whitchurch, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Future Digital Economy and Online Safety, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and Department for Business and Trade; Catherine McKinnell MP, Minister of State (Minister for School Standards), Department for Education; Chloe Templeton, Deputy Director for Information Resilience and Public Safety, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology; Matthew Hopkinson, Deputy Director, Life Skills Division, Department for Education.

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## Examination of witnesses

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch, Catherine McKinnell MP, Chloe Templeton and Matthew Hopkinson.

**Q248 The Chair:** Good afternoon, and welcome to this meeting of the Communications and Digital Committee. I am the committee's Chair, Baroness Barbara Keeley. This is the final evidence session of our inquiry into media literacy, and we are very pleased today to have with us Government Ministers who have responsibility for various areas that our inquiry has examined. We are now broadcasting live and a transcript of today's discussion will be taken. Could I begin by asking our witnesses to introduce themselves, starting on my left?

**Matthew Hopkinson:** I am deputy director for life skills in the Department for Education.

**Catherine McKinnell MP:** I am the Minister for School Standards.

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** I am the Minister for Online Safety and the Digital Economy.

**Chloe Templeton:** I am deputy director for information resilience, which includes media literacy, at the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

**The Chair:** Thank you. It would be usual for the Chair to ask the first question, but I am not doing that today; I am asking a different question. I am going to invite Lord Knight to ask the first question.

**Q249 Lord Knight of Weymouth:** Welcome and thanks very much for coming. Can I just start by asking you whether you think it is important for the Government to have a strategy on media literacy, and whether you think in recent years things have changed around the need for that for adults and children? Maggie, do you want to start?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Yes, I do think that the Government should have a strategy. Things have changed in the awareness of the need for it. Obviously, the tech sector itself is moving at pace; we all know that. We need to make sure that people have the skills to address the new expectation and demands on them. It goes without saying that some of the opportunities of the tech sector are hugely beneficial, but obviously we know there are huge downsides as well, so we need to make sure that the Government give the right direction for that and we have a role to play in that—across Government, I should say, not just my own department. Obviously, as you know, Ofcom has a role in all of this as well. Where there is a strategy, it is, if you like, a joint strategy—a joint programme—and I think it is good that the Government are approaching it on a cross-departmental basis, because in the past we have tried to address it in silos and that has not really worked. Having that broader view of how to address this issue is really important.

**Q250 Lord Knight of Weymouth:** Catherine, you agree?

**Catherine McKinnell MP:** Yes, and on that basis, we are very grateful for your committee initiating this inquiry. It is really important that we equip children to leave school with knowledge, with understanding, with skills, so that they can harness all of the opportunities that information and communication technology can bring, but also that they can keep themselves safe. The two are equally important. Particularly, it is great that we can educate children to harness all of the opportunities and use them in a creative and purposeful way. That does need a joined-up approach to ensure that we can maximise those opportunities whilst ensuring we keep young people safe as well.

Q251 **Lord Knight of Weymouth:** Thank you. We have heard fairly consistent criticism that the sector around media literacy remains fragmented, underfunded and underevaluated. That is despite the previous Government's 2021 media literacy strategy. What is your assessment of the Government's media literacy work to date? Do you share that view that the sector is fragmented, underfunded and underevaluated?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The previous Government were on a learning curve on all of this. At that time it seemed to be a relatively new area. The initiatives that they funded were quite worthwhile. You will know, I am sure, some of the detail of it and some of the funding arrangements of it. They had £3 million grant funding<sup>1</sup> and the Government funding 17 projects, and there were some very real learnings that we took from that, particularly some of the work that the National Literacy Trust and Parent Zone did. I can give more details if you like, but I think for us that was a bit of a watermark. Now we need to learn the lessons from those pilots, if you like, and the experimental work that they did, and perhaps apply it in a more consistent way going forward. Was it fragmented? It was not as comprehensive as it could have been, let us put it that way. There was a lot that was well meant in what was being funded, but now I think we have a better idea of where the gaps are and what we need to do in the future.

Q252 **Lord Knight of Weymouth:** As you say, we had funding of a number of bits of research and pilots and a certain amount of discovery around best practice. We heard from Ofcom last week about some of the things that they have been funding as well. How do we get to any kind of scale-up of those sorts of pilots and the lessons learned, and what other lessons have you learned from those relatively small projects?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** I do not know how much of this you know, but we are basically putting most of the media literacy work in the digital inclusion action plan because there is so much overlap. We were talking about fragmentation before; we see now that one of the Government's major priorities, which is the digital inclusion work and therefore the digital inclusion action plan, provides a really good umbrella body, if you like, for our work on media literacy. So much of

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<sup>1</sup> Added by the witness: This refers to the total grant funding allocated for the period from 2022 to 2025.

that is about reaching out to the disadvantaged communities and making sure that they have the right skills and the right equipment to make the most of the new digital world that we are entering. But the downside of all of that is they also need the right skills, and that is what a lot of our media literacy work is going to be going forward.

You mentioned Ofcom. I think it is worth stressing as well that we are working very closely with Ofcom. The Government have a role to play, Ofcom has a role to play, other government departments have a role to play. We need to make sure that that is all joined up and we now are doing a much better job, I think, of joining all of that up.

- Q253 Lord Knight of Weymouth:** On hearing from Ofcom, my impression of its role—it had the phrases “a convening role” and “a funding of pilots role”—gave a sense that that then left someone else to fund the scale-up. I think Ofcom said that its funding was less than £2 million for this. Yours was somewhere around £3 million. If you have less than £5 million being spent on media literacy by Government as a whole, we are not going to get any scale-up, are we?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Well, you are holding the inquiry at a slightly awkward time, as you probably know, because the spending review announcement is tomorrow. So I am afraid you will have to wait for some of those announcements. But the way we see it is that the Government’s role is to co-ordinate and provide the legislation that we need to; look at the curriculum issues, which I know Catherine will talk about; provide the funding; and do some of the campaigning work. We expect Ofcom to get into the guts of the media literacy duties; develop the strategy; do the research, which is really important because we are still at base camp on what we know about the needs for media literacy; and do some of that platform engagement.

That all needs to happen and, of course, there is also a role for the tech companies themselves, and Ofcom needs to make sure that it is stepping up and carrying out its functions as well. Going forward, it will be a much more comprehensive package. Will it scale up to your ambition? It is hard to say at the moment. Some of that will obviously depend on funding. But the Government understand the need for it and how much we need to embed it in so many of our different activities.

- Q254 Lord Knight of Weymouth:** We will come on to the role of the tech companies at the end and we are about to come on to the digital inclusion action plan. My final question to Maggie, for now, is that last December you told the Youth Select Committee that DSIT was working on a media literacy public awareness campaign for January. You said you had just signed off some stuff. When will this be launched?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Very soon, I would say. We have a communications plan and are quite excited about it. We are working with campaign influencers and so on. At the moment a lot of our activity is with particular communities and individuals, but we of course need to do things on a bigger scale. If we get the campaign right, it will reach many

more communities than we have been able to at the moment. Please bear with us; it is due to happen.

- Q255 **Baroness Owen of Alderley Edge:** Can you confirm, Minister, that the digital inclusion action plan now represents the Government's national strategy and framework for media literacy?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Yes, that is where you will find our media literacy plans going forward, from the next spending review onwards—so from next year onwards.

- Q256 **Baroness Owen of Alderley Edge:** With that in mind, media literacy is mentioned only three times in the plan. What steps can you take to ensure that media literacy and critical thinking are not overlooked? Parent Zone said it is concerned that media literacy is becoming "a subset of something bigger and more important, which means that it does not have the focus and the long-term planning that it should". How would you respond to that, and what steps are you taking to ensure that critical thinking skills are not overlooked?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The digital inclusion action plan has all the elements you would expect of digital inclusion, digital skills and media literacy. We see all those issues as of equal importance. At the moment, I am sorry to say, it goes back to how much funding we get. But we have a very ambitious programme for the digital inclusion plan, so media literacy will not be overlooked.

One of the problems we have with all this, which I know colleagues will appreciate, is that a lot of media literacy is not tagged as media literacy. It is one of those phrases whose meaning we all think we know but, actually, a lot of organisations are doing good work in this area but do not describe it as media literacy. Within that overall umbrella, I am pretty confident that media literacy will be a major part of that activity. I hope that when the action plan is rolled out you will see more evidence of that.

- Q257 **Baroness Owen of Alderley Edge:** With that in mind, how will the digital inclusion action committee and digital inclusion and skills unit build on the work of the now disbanded Media Literacy Taskforce?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Part of it is learning from what has already occurred. As I said, we had some helpful learning about how to reach out to the people, families and also parents—which is a particular challenge as I am sure you will appreciate—who will really benefit from it. We have learned some lessons from that and it is helping us to focus more on the people who we really feel would benefit from the activities we will carry out going forward.

It is never going to be, and I do not think it can be, absolutely thorough and all-embracing. We would like everybody to be media literate. That is a huge ambition and a real stretch. Government can only do so much, but we will do absolutely everything we can to make this a reality.

**Chloe Templeton:** I would just add that the digital inclusion action committee will have a very broad range of expert stakeholders taking part, and some will be media literacy experts who will be able to feed in expertise and knowledge on media literacy through that committee.

Q258 **Baroness Owen of Alderley Edge:** In some of the evidence the committee has taken and some of the written evidence that has been sent in, there seems to be a lot of concern that media literacy will be lost in the bigger picture. The Guardian Foundation said digital inclusion programmes “tend to be focused on functional digital skills and often miss out the crucial critical thinking skills that must go alongside these”. So my final question is: how are the Government engaged with media literacy practitioners to ensure that is not lost in the wider digital inclusion action plan?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** We have very good connections with civil society organisations, which have, of course, played a crucial role in the past in delivering our media literacy projects. For example, Internet Matters has provided high-quality resources for parents, Childnet runs the digital leaders programme, and there are a number of other organisations, including National Literacy Trust and Parent Zone. There are a wide range of organisations carrying out this work. As I said earlier, it is not always called “media literacy” but it is making sure that people have got the right skills and tools so that they cannot be exploited in the online world.

We have quite good relationships with the stakeholders. I am sure there is more we could do. Hopefully, some of the new funding coming on stream will fund new initiatives from those organisations.

**The Chair:** I will come to Viscount Colville in a moment but Lord Knight assures me he has a very short question.

Q259 **Lord Knight of Weymouth:** I just want to push a bit further on from where Charlotte had got to. It is very clear that there is a concern from a number of different witnesses that, if it becomes a subset of something bigger and more important, it gets lost. Can you commit that the work you will do around the digital inclusion action plan and the work of the group you have convened will report quite discretely on media literacy, so that we can be confident that it will not be lost and that this is something that is a priority to the Government?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** That is a fair challenge. Part of the reason why I encouraged it to be part of the digital inclusion action plan was because I felt that as a standalone it was getting lost. Now, it has got a much better chance. Because digital inclusion is such an important priority for the Government, the media literacy element of that will be a priority as well. Whereas before it never really had a proper home—obviously, it was part of our department but it was never seen as a big strategic role in the department—it will now have the support, funding and expertise it requires.

I can see why you are concerned about it but I genuinely do not think it will be a problem. I genuinely think the digital inclusion action plan will take this seriously and will report on the media literacy elements of it.

**Chloe Templeton:** Just to expand on that, we know one of the reasons why people are not digitally included is because they are fearful of something bad happening to them on the internet. One way to counter that is to equip those people with those critical skills. I assure you that critical skills will absolutely be a part of this, alongside functional skills, because we know that that is a really good way to give people the skills and confidence to make the best use of the digital environment without having any concerns about being scammed or whatever.

This is part of the action plan but that does not mean we cannot also do the strategic thinking about media literacy alongside that. We will come on to the cross-Whitehall elements of this but I assure you there is also a great deal of strategic thinking happening about media literacy on its own as well as being part of these other initiatives.

Q260 **Viscount Colville of Culross:** Good afternoon. Baroness Jones, you just said Ofcom is there to get into the guts and develop media literacy strategy. However, if you look at the powers that are given under the Online Safety Act, which both you and I know all too well about, it says that Ofcom has the power to take "steps ... most likely to be effective in heightening the public's awareness ... of ways in which they can protect themselves ... when using regulated services". That seems to be quite a narrow scope. Is it too narrow a scope? It seems to focus on making sure the regulator focuses on online harms rather than the other areas you just talked about. How can that scope be extended when we have given Ofcom such limited powers?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Our discussions with Ofcom have moved on from that. We are now much clearer about what the Government's role is and what Ofcom's role is. I know that you have taken evidence from Ofcom and I am interested to know what Ofcom said. My understanding is that it now sees its role as much broader than the very detailed specifics in the Act. It has to prepare a media literacy strategy every three years and we expect that to be more all-encompassing than simply a narrow definition of it.

**Chloe Templeton:** Ofcom has had a very wide media literacy duty in statute since 2003 under the Communications Act. We added some specificity to that through the Online Safety Act, to make it have more of an online safety function. Obviously, 2003 was very early in the invention of all these technologies. So we tried through the Online Safety Act to give them quite extended powers on top of that existing, fairly comprehensive, duty to be very specific around the challenges around online safety.

Q261 **Viscount Colville of Culross:** Ofcom told us it saw its focus as identifying and filling gaps and that it was not up to Ofcom to provide national media literacy provision. How does that limitation in how Ofcom

sees itself and its role fit in with what the Government want to do to extend media literacy across the nation?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Ofcom's media literacy strategy is much broader than that, so perhaps it undersold itself. It has to produce the overarching strategy and it has a duty to promote and research media literacy, raise awareness of misinformation and help the public understand harmful content and behaviour, which is perhaps part of what you are talking about. It also has a responsibility to do research, platform engagement and, basically, develop good practice, and it is already taking steps to do that. I have confidence that Ofcom's role and the role of the Government are complementary to each other and that we know what each other is doing. Obviously, we have regular discussions with Ofcom about this, as with other things. I feel like it is joined up in the way that you are concerned about; I reassure you that to us it feels much more joined up.

Q262 **Viscount Colville of Culross:** If Ofcom is doing what you have just said, can you explain how the Government then take that on in order to roll out a nationwide media literary strategy?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** We see our role as setting the strategic direction; legislating where necessary; co-ordinating across departments, which is an increasing part of our role because, as I said, there is so much going on in other departments as well as our own; and doing some of the campaigning work. I hope that when you see it you will like and be impressed by the campaign we are planning to do.

Some of that cross-departmental work is very important. We lead a cross-government co-ordination group—a new Whitehall working group that is looking at this and is basically meant to be aligning all the efforts of all the different departments. Apart from our work with the Department for Education, we are working with the Prevent strategy, MHCLG's work on local government, training on how to deal with disinformation and misinformation in particular incidents, and some of the antisemitism work as well. There is a lot going on with local government delivery, such as libraries and youth centres, so we need to make sure we are not duplicating. I have the spread of all the work going on, which, as I say, is not always called "media literacy" but is very important for doing the broader education piece that would not necessarily be done by the Department for Education.

Q263 **Viscount Colville of Culross:** My ears pricked up when you talked about looking at what sort of legislation there might be. Can you give us a sneak preview of what you have come up with and what sort of legislation is needed to make this work?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** No. I will be interested to see the result of your inquiry, but I am not sure that more legislation is what we need. We need better co-ordination and better funding, and that is really what we are working towards. I think that we understand the task. There is nothing preventing us doing the broader education piece that we need

to do. We do not need to be enabled by a bit of legislation; we all understand what needs to happen now. Obviously, if we do need legislation we will take steps, but for me it does not feel like a top priority.

**Q264 The Chair:** I am going to move on to a question about the curriculum now, which is more directed at Catherine McKinnell. We have heard that good media literacy education is characterised by sustained, repeated engagement interwoven throughout the school curriculum across all subjects. But, sadly, we have heard lots of evidence that suggests it is not like that at the moment in state schools and, very specifically, that the rigidity of the curriculum and the emphasis on assessment seem to have meant that media literacy skills are deprioritised because they are not assessed and that media literacy is relegated to an optional subject or comes ad hoc under PSHE or pastoral care. It was interesting to us that Members of the UK Youth Parliament described to us sessions that were reactive, infrequent and did not engage pupils. We have built a picture of that being how it is. How will the curriculum and assessment review ensure that this important subject, media literacy, is properly embedded in the curriculum? Will the Government change the prioritisation and accountability measures so that media literacy is not deprioritised in future?

**Catherine McKinnell MP:** I absolutely agree that we need to equip children and young people with the skills. It is, as you have characterised it, often perceived as a reactionary thing, to keep them safe and to make sure that they are not scammed or taken in by misinformation. But there is an equal and important need to ensure that all young people, regardless of their background and circumstances, are empowered through education to really harness the benefits of technology, AI and media literacy, and are able to critically appraise information and be curious about what they are seeing and questioning about the information they are being given and are absorbing.

We know that the curriculum was reviewed more than 12 years ago now and the way that people consume and receive information has completely changed in that time. I am sure you will have noted in the interim report on the curriculum and assessment review the rise of AI and trends in digital information and how necessary it is that the curriculum keeps pace with those changes and that we have a renewed focus on some of the challenges and opportunities.

As you know, we are awaiting the recommendations out of the curriculum review. We will have to wait, as will members of your committee. Obviously, we will look at the findings when they are published and work to ensure that these skills are embedded within young people's education, because it is also one of the very clear messages that we have received from employers that they want young people to have these skills. Media literacy and other skills are clearly important, not just for maximising their opportunity to raise standards within education and through education, but also being skilled to go out into the world and take up the jobs that will be available in the future.

**Q265 The Chair:** Obviously there is the curriculum review, but there is the question too of the accountability measures for EBacc. The very strong view is that something could change and something needs to change to make this happen, because the young people described sessions, occurring just a couple of times a year, with boring PowerPoint presentations at 8:30 in the morning or teachers just trying to make them scared of social media and saying, "This is bad, do not go on to it". That was the sort of mishmash that we were hearing about.

**Catherine McKinnell MP:** Media literacy, in a sense, is embedded across the curriculum already. Students that study history will learn to critically appraise their sources, sift arguments, develop perspectives, and will have to take judgments on the perspectives presented to them. In English, schools use a whole range of texts to support viewpoints, stand up arguments, and present bias and misuse of evidence. In citizenship education, which is maybe where some of your references have come from, young people should be learning to distinguish fact from opinion, understand the value of freedom of speech, and recognise the media's role in shaping public opinion. Then there is the computing side, where you learn about algorithms, search engines, and how technology is developing. That is the current situation, but clearly we want to make sure, through the curriculum review, that everybody benefits from appreciating the value of developing these skills—and in the modern context that we live in today.

You are also referencing the role of Ofsted, perhaps, and how schools are assessed. There is a review ongoing into Ofsted, and its inspections, and how it reports on schools. There is not a standalone inspection category for media literacy, but we do know already that inspectors consider how well schools are equipping children and young people to navigate the media, to understand how to keep themselves safe online, to navigate information responsibly, and clearly, once the new report cards are developed, there will be a whole range of categories that schools will be assessed against. The quality of that education will be key to ensuring that we achieve the aim, which is to ensure that we have digitally and media-literate young people.

**Q266 The Chair:** That is interesting. Moving on from that, how will the Government ensure the increased focus on digital skills? Obviously, there was the announcement yesterday about the development of skills in AI and tech among secondary school pupils—TechYouth received £24 million in government funding over three years. How will you ensure that the focus on digital skills, which is clearly there, goes beyond functional skills to include critical thinking and creative skills? You have touched on it, but it was certainly our impression that it is not being taught, and not being taught well, at the moment.

**Catherine McKinnell MP:** Clearly, digital skills are an important part of education, and there is huge discussion ongoing about AI and its use within the education sector—whether that is for the teachers themselves, to relieve workload and to give them more face-to-face student time, or whether it is to support the development of understanding among young

people about the potential of AI, and to ensure that it is safe and reliable within that context. There has been a clear ask from the sector for the Department for Education to create online materials to help educators be able to teach about the use of digital and AI effectively. That is something we have responded to and produced toolkits and other support for teachers. In terms of embedding it, obviously we will have to await the outcome of the curriculum and assessment review, which is an independent process, and we respect that.

**Q267 The Chair:** Can I ask you then how you will improve training and support for teachers to develop media literacy, because that did seem to be a big stumbling block? We heard about teachers who did not feel confident in their own skills—even, unfortunately in some schools, suppressing certain subjects from being discussed in things like citizenship classes. That is not helpful. How will training and support for teachers to deliver that improve? Clearly that has to happen first.

**Catherine McKinnell MP:** Yes. Actually, you identify one of our key priorities as a department across the board: high-quality teaching and making sure that we have the teaching workforce that we need. That is why we have our very clear pledge to recruit 6,500 more teachers, because we know that in some of the specialist areas in particular we do not have sufficient teachers. Also, we will make sure that those teachers have the best-quality training, best-quality support and ongoing professional development to support them to teach what will be a new curriculum when we roll it out. We need to make sure that the training and support is in place.

You quite rightly identified, and we know, that the quality of teaching is the number one in-school factor that can drive high and rising standards for all children right across the board. That is something we are very committed to. As well as having the teacher training and the teacher support, we must make sure that we have products and materials that can support good-quality teaching of these subjects. That is why we have developed some of the AI tools. Aila, for example, is one that has been developed, and we have got the National Centre for Computing Education as an online resource for teachers to develop their skills and understanding in this area. We recognise that as a key priority for us as a department.

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** It is worth adding as well that upgrading our digital skills in the UK is an economic necessity, because we are currently carrying something like 100,000 vacancies for jobs which we cannot fill because we have not got the people with the right digital skills. The question of media literacy is broader, but it is a national priority for the Government. In addition to the work that the Department for Education is doing in the curriculum, Skills England is gearing up to provide a different curriculum, for example, for the FE sector. We are developing short courses which go under the tag of being bootcamps, but they are just intensive courses on digital skills. We need to make sure—hopefully—that using the digital sector responsibly is built into

those short courses as well. It is a very broad range of educational initiatives taking place.

- Q268 **The Chair:** Would it be Ministers' ambition to expand what you announced yesterday? If it reaches 1 million secondary school pupils, that is only a proportion of the secondary school pupils. When would it expand so that all pupils would be able to access development in these schools?

**Matthew Hopkinson:** As part of the wider context, it is important to look at the curriculum review. You talked about taking a strategic approach, and actually the things that get in the way of schools providing the right and good-quality training is sometimes about the overall burden and what is there on schools. I think it is right that the curriculum and assessment review is looking at both the curriculum and the assessment and how these things fit together. Actually, we know that there are plenty of schools who can do and do media literacy well, and there is good stuff out there to support, but it is a question of how that balances out and making sure that schools have a certain amount of freedom to do that while keeping that focus on high standards.

It is important for us to think, "Okay, what do we get from the curriculum and assessment review? What is the overall shape of the curriculum, the overall set of things we want to teach?" It is notable that a number of these subjects that we talk about are actually compulsory in key stage 4, regardless of whether or not you are doing a GCSE—so RSHE and citizenship and computing are all in that space. There are all sorts of reasons why you do not necessarily get a consistent experience. It is about seeing it in that bigger picture. Therefore, the context for how you build on things like initiatives and tech focus is to take that comprehensive look across the curriculum and work out how you support from there. That is the really positive thing about the curriculum and assessment review and its focus.

- Q269 **The Chair:** In our inquiry, we looked at international comparisons and it is quite clear that the countries that excel at media literacy start early, very young, in kindergarten. Is that an ambition for the Government?

**Catherine McKinnell MP:** Yes. I know and have seen for myself that there is at the moment important sector-delivered engagement, particularly on online safety for children and young people. There is an important offer that children who are very young—we recognise that children are online from quite a young age—are taught to stay safe. That is compulsory as part of relationships education because, clearly, children can develop relationships online from a young age. This is part of them keeping themselves safe, keeping others safe and the education aspect.

On the media literacy side, which I know you are particularly focused on, we are obviously looking at the curriculum and the full span of education from key stage 1 to the end of key stage 4. Children look at democracy—"British values" is how it is framed at the moment—and, within that, they

learn about freedom of information and a sense of democracy and participation. I know that lots of children at school watch “Newsround” and engage in media from that perspective. But, as you said, making sure that critical thinking skills and taking active participation within media literacy is important. We will look at that as part of the review.

**Q270 The Chair:** It is worth saying that we were very impressed when we visited the BBC and we have had a session with it since on what it is doing. But, again, it is small-scale. Their teams are only reaching thousands. We are not talking about that being done at scale.

**Catherine McKinnell MP:** If it is helpful, I would add that the Department for Education has also recently appointed a task and finish group to advise specifically on some of the future pipeline skills that are required, both digital and AI-specific skills, to prepare children and young people to make the most of those opportunities. That task and finish group will report as it carries on with its work. It is focused particularly on maths, computing education, AI, technology and on ensuring that, from a Department for Education perspective, we are maximising the opportunities in this space.

**Q271 The Chair:** What steps are the Government taking to help parents develop media literacy skills? Clearly that is an important part of this picture. What are we doing for parents at home?

**Catherine McKinnell MP:** Some of that is cross-government. Shall I start from an education perspective? Clearly, we recognise the really important role that parents have in shaping their children’s online behaviour. It is a shared priority across Government. We work on a cross-departmental basis to make sure we maximise the impact we can have on this.

From a Department for Education perspective, we publish comprehensive guidance on resources for parents and schools, but it is accessible for everyone. Education Against Hate provides support for teachers and parents to protect their children from extreme views and radicalisation and there is also parent-specific content as part of that. The department engages with parents—particularly on online safety and some of the concerns around extreme misogyny, which we know is a big challenge—and makes sure that we gather the recommendations we get, the insights we find and the most valuable tools to engage with parents on these subjects. But fundamentally, which is where I will hand over to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, parental engagement happens more through the strategy.

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** In 2004, DSIT expanded Parent Zone, which is a parent-focused programme that has reached over 63,000 parents. Evaluation of that showed that it developed and improved the understanding of media literacy and setting digital boundaries. So, as a result of that activity, we are now beginning to know what works. We are also researching parents’ media literacy needs to identify the challenges

and assess resources. The findings of that piece of work will be published very soon.<sup>2</sup>

It is also worth saying that Ofcom's role, under its three-year strategy, is prioritising children and families, working with the multi-academy trusts and third-sector partners, and investing in teacher training. DSIT is supporting Ofcom to engage across Government to, again, make sure that there is not any duplication in that work. We are doing it partly through DSIT and partly through Ofcom.

- Q272 Lord Knight of Weymouth:** There has been a lot of discussion about critical thinking being important. My assessment of the evidence supports that and supports it being cross-curricular. Developing critical thinking in all subjects on the curriculum seems really important. Yet we have a system, possibly thanks to accountability but for whatever reason, where, certainly at the end of key stage 4 with the examinations of the national curriculum through GCSEs, children are routinely taught model answers and what the marking scheme looks like, which is the very opposite of critical thinking—it is all about just recalling what you are supposed to say. The remit the department gave the review was evolution not revolution. Do you think that this is an area where, in order to get critical thinking across the curriculum, we need more boldness in our thinking and less “steady as she goes”?

**Catherine McKinnell MP:** You tempt me to anticipate the outcome of the review. As you rightly identify, in the remit, the interim report and also through the call for evidence, we have received the message loud and clear that people want to see more skills for life. Those skills include financial, digital and media literacy, and, as you have identified, the way young people are assessed and demonstrate what they have learned should be able to make sure that those skills are embedded within it, so that it does prepare them for life and the ability to think critically and appraise information.

As part of the next phase of work, the panel is actively examining how education can better prepare young people to grasp the opportunities that will come to them, looking particularly at media literacy and digital skills. It is as much about what information they are given as it is about how they receive it, process it and what they do with it. It is a fully independent review but I understand and appreciate that it is actively engaging on these issues, which you have quite rightly identified.

- Q273 Baroness Wheatcroft:** Minister, you have said that you are fearful that media literacy, being such a vague term in some ways, would vanish if it did not have the umbrella of the digital inclusion action plan, which is where it is now. But we still keep hearing that so many government departments and other departments are involved. Are you confident that enough is being done to co-ordinate the work they do, and that they are

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<sup>2</sup> Added by the witness: The findings have been published and are available on Parent Zone's website: <https://parentzone.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-04/Everyday%20Digital%20Final%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf>

all being pulled together, or is that simply an impossible task?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** That is a good challenge and we have been slow to co-ordinate, if I am honest. I think that we are now realising that. As so often with government departments, you do something and then you realise that another department is doing something very similar. We are now addressing that and overcoming it. We are doing it through a working group. It is not a big formal structure, but is all the better for that because it is more flexible and fleeter of foot. People are able to come together and share information in a fairly up-to-date way rather than writing long papers and having to have them approved.

I feel that at long last we are pulling it all together and making sure there is not the duplication that would otherwise be the case. I can imagine your next question is: how will we ever report on all that co-ordination? That is a good challenge for us.

Q274 **Baroness Wheatcroft:** It will be a rather more basic one. I wondered whether you could tell us a little more about who runs the working group, who pulls it together, and who is in charge?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Certainly. We run it. I do not know, but I suspect that the person who is running it is sitting next to me, so she might be able to answer.

**Chloe Templeton:** I can confidently say this is the most joined-up we have been across Whitehall on this issue, for sure, in the time that I have been working on this. We did a mapping exercise of all the work that was happening across Whitehall. We have built great relationships with those departments. I think we now have a very good understanding of, as the Minister was saying, those types of work that may not be badged as media literacy but which actually are definitely under that umbrella.

It is in its infancy as a working group. We have met once. We are meeting again this week. We have it at a deputy director level and at a more junior working level as well. The idea behind it is to bring together the evidence base, because that also is spread across Government, and if we can bring that together that would be incredibly helpful. We can also pool resources this way, and also just have a much clearer strategic vision that we can hopefully then articulate publicly. Of course, we can do that to this committee at some point. That is the kind of idea behind it. I am really pleased with the work that has happened on it. We have had a lot of interest from other government departments as well now on media literacy as a tool to help them deliver their policy objectives across a whole range of harms, both online and offline.

**Baroness Wheatcroft:** Are you telling us that the working group will meet once a week? Is that the formal structure?

**Chloe Templeton:** At the moment, they are meeting monthly.

**Baroness Wheatcroft:** Do you think that might need to change?

**Chloe Templeton:** It is very flexible. We set the terms of the working group in my team, so if we think it needs to happen more frequently we can certainly do that. That is not the only time we see the people within it; we are meeting with them bilaterally, literally every week.

Q275 **Baroness Wheatcroft:** One of the concerns that we have heard is that libraries can do a certain amount—all sorts of organisations can do a certain amount—but they are not really getting any funding to do it. Certainly, libraries have been deprived of funding for a long time now. Can you reassure us that perhaps libraries are going to get some extra money in order to do this sort of thing?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** That will be through the MHCLG bid.<sup>3</sup> I certainly hope so, because you are absolutely right that libraries have a really important role to play. A lot of that is determined locally by the individual local authorities, as you know. But we think that libraries have a crucial role to play in media literacy and the digital inclusion issue as a whole. Increasingly, they are stepping up to that, to carry out that much wider range of responsibilities rather than just as a place to exchange books. Yes, we see them as a really important partner, but I cannot say to you whether they are going to get increased funding. I certainly hope they would do.

**Chloe Templeton:** The DCMS libraries team is part of the working group as well, so it is involved.

Q276 **Baroness Wheatcroft:** I know you are short of time, but we have heard increasingly that Ofcom is to take responsibility for this, that and the other, and the workload on Ofcom sounds extraordinary, but we are also hearing that relations between Government and Ofcom are, perhaps because of that workload, somewhat stretched. Can you reassure us that there is a good working relationship?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** I would say yes. I am surprised that you have heard that. I would say we have a very good relationship with Ofcom. Obviously we meet with them on a very regular basis. They do have a huge workload and we are hugely sympathetic to that. We are checking with them to make sure that they have got the resources that they feel that they need to carry out the very wide range of duties that they have got. I would say our relationship with them is very strong and, yes, very productive. I would be surprised—genuinely surprised—if there was any evidence that it was not the case.

**The Chair:** It is worth saying that Catherine McKinnell, the DfE Minister, has just had to go to vote, so she will rejoin us in a minute or two, I am sure. Can we work around that with the questions?

**Baroness Wheatcroft:** If you could provide us with more information about how constructive the working relationship with Ofcom is, that would be extremely helpful.

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<sup>3</sup> Added by the witness: Public libraries fall under the remit of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** I am sure we could do, of course. Yes.

**Chloe Templeton:** My team meet twice a month with the media literacy team at Ofcom. We have an excellent working relationship with them, where they update us regularly on the work that they are doing under their duties on the Online Safety Act and also on their progress on the strategy, and where we share with them our priorities. They are very active in their communication with us, and it is a very positive, productive working relationship.

Q277 **Baroness Wheatcroft:** My final point is to do with media literacy strategy generally. How are you making sure that best practice is disseminated, particularly outside schools, because we have heard a lot about what is going on in schools, but how does that get to a broader audience?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** We are on a learning curve here. We are learning from the pilots that have been run. We are learning from the research that has happened. We will learn from the communications campaign that we are going to launch. All of those will be properly evaluated. We realise that the next step is to start embedding some of this good practice in the media literacy element of the digital inclusion plan. We are clear about how we need to take this forward.

One of the challenges for us is that all the evidence and all the good practice is showing that community-led initiatives can be more effective than doing things from the Government. Obviously that is a real challenge for us in organising lots of different community activities. We have seen the evidence that it works. It is resource intensive but arguably it is worth doing if it has the right effect. But it is a huge challenge for us to roll that out on a comprehensive basis. That is why co-ordination across the Government is so important, because we can all play our part to make sure that we maximise the resources and the expertise that we have. I would not deny that it is a huge challenge to do this on a comprehensive basis, but that is our plan.

Q278 **Lord Storey:** You rightly said that it is important to talk to various partners, and I think all of us were quite shocked that a number of witnesses talked about the lack of engagement from the Department for Education. One person delivering a teacher training course said, "The DfE department, believe it or not, is the department we least speak to". Another witness described DfE's limited collaboration with media literacy stakeholders as the elephant in the room. Now that might be the past, not the present, not the future, but we were all very worried about that.

**The Chair:** We may have to come back to that in a moment when the DfE Minister rejoins us, unless there is anything you want to say about that.

**Matthew Hopkinson:** It is worth saying that, as I was saying earlier, we have got this sort of proper overall approach to the curriculum and assessment as a whole through the curriculum and assessment review. The nature of engagement does change in that sort of space. The

curriculum and assessment review's interim report reflected the fact that they have been taking these things on board, and there is specific recognition of some of those AI issues and the things that they need to go through. Obviously, if you are doing a full curriculum and assessment review, you are taking evidence from and input from a huge range of people, and there is a further set of engagement to go on following that interim report where they look into particular issues, including some of the stuff across the curriculum. If there is that sort of sense with DfE, I would hope that the fact that we are taking a fundamental look, and the engagement that is being done in the context of the review, ought to be a really good starting point for doing that review. Then, afterwards, how do you take it on and make sure that the things you have got for teaching are actually supported? You get the quality coming off the back of that—the quality of experience and the coverage of the things which the review identifies as being important.

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** It is worth saying as well that the Department for Education ran a very extensive consultation on the curriculum review. There should have been plenty of opportunities for people to feel that they were engaged and had their voice heard. I hope that where people feel they have not been listened to, they used those routes that existed to have some influence.

- Q279 **The Chair:** Before we leave the subject of libraries, we understand there is a role for libraries in media literacy. But 500 public libraries—I checked, and it seemed to be that number—are run by volunteers. So it is not a question of having a workforce to work with but also of having very large numbers of volunteers up and down communities. I was an MP in Salford, and a number of our public libraries were run by volunteers. Is that being taken into account? Clearly, there seems to be a very strong suggestion in the evidence we have had that public libraries and librarians can have a role, but we are in the position that a lot of them are run by volunteers.

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** That is a DCMS issue, really. Obviously, we are doing our best to liaise with them and I hope that they, as part of their library strategy, will be able to provide you with more information on that. But it is a good point, and it goes back to the point I made earlier, that we see libraries as having a central role in some of the media literacy work going forward, precisely because, as I said, so many good initiatives are community-based and libraries are at the heart of our communities and understand the issues better than a lot of other people would do.

- Q280 **Baroness Fleet:** I have two questions. The first is to Baroness Jones. I am interested in libraries. One of the things many people have said, and I think you have said it as well, is that a lot of older people do not know what media literacy is. Do you think your public awareness campaign should call it something else? Do you think we should call the work we are doing now something other than "media literacy"? Would you like it to be called "digital skills and media literacy", so that it engages people?

A lot of people have given evidence saying, "Most adults don't know what you're talking about, but if you say you can avoid being scammed or learn how to use a health app, then that connects". What is your thought on that and what would your recommendation be?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** I am pretty sure our communications campaign will not call it media literacy. I am sure it will be a bit jazzier than that. It is a good challenge because we insiders, if you like, use it as shorthand for all sorts of things that do not resonate very much with the rest of the community.

Could we find another way of describing it? The digital inclusion action plan addresses it in other ways than just using that formal title. We need to make sure we do not get hidebound by the terminology. We are talking about something broader than the traditional sense of media literacy.

Q281 **Baroness Fleet:** The other half of the question, which I will direct at Catherine, is about delivery. We have heard from a lot of people about great small projects scattershotting around the country but the majority not doing it. We have also heard that the majority of teachers know far less than their secondary school pupils, in particular, know. Who will deliver this knowledge, integrated as perhaps it might be into English, history, PHSE and so forth? Will there a super-turbocharged training programme for teachers or will people come in from outside? I know you cannot tell us what will happen but how would you like to see it happen?

**Catherine McKinnell MP:** First of all, as you rightly pointed out at the end, we have not completed the review. The steps we need to take to implement the outcomes of the review still need to be worked through. But you correctly identify the challenge, which is to make sure that this is done consistently, well, and is of high quality.

There is very fair challenge in the room. On relationships, sex and health education, for example, we have had very clear feedback that there needs to be a really strong element of online safety and recognising some of the harms that can occur online for young people particularly. Clearly, you need teachers that are confident and comfortable to engage and support young people with learning the content if it is going to have the impact we want it to. The RSHE guidance is currently under review and the curriculum is currently under review. What is not under review and what we are already working on is the high-quality teaching framework; the initial teacher training that we are already ensuring has a high-quality framework for all teachers that they can then apply in whatever setting and to whatever subject.

That will address some of the additional challenges relating to special educational needs and disabilities, to make sure we have a teaching workforce that truly is trained, professionalised and empowered to teach a whole range of students with a whole range of abilities and address some of these challenging topics and issues. We are working on the quality of teacher training and continuous professional development.

A key element here as well is that the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, which is making its way through your House, will apply the curriculum, once it is developed, across all maintained and academy schools. That will ensure that every school is in receipt of the curriculum once it is developed. So, there will be a universality that is not currently in the system.

**Q282 Baroness Fleet:** Are you suggesting the teacher training, the ITT, is already happening and the inclusion of digital skills and media literacy is already under way? Or is this something you are anticipating?

**Catherine McKinnell MP:** Not specifically. We have been working hard to improve the quality of initial teacher training, because the feedback we get is that teachers really value the high-quality training at the initial stages of their career. The way we implement the curriculum and assessment review will determine the additional support.

To be honest, it is for schools to determine what support they need within their school setting to deliver the curriculum once it is developed, but we are focused on creating that initial quality teacher training framework that ensures every teacher is set up to be able to deliver to the highest standard in their specialist subject area.

**The Chair:** Lord Storey, do you want to ask your question related to engagement with DfE now that the Minister is back with us?

**Lord Storey:** I think the answer I got was okay.

**The Chair:** Before we leave that, I touched on libraries, and although we were not able to have a DCMS Minister with us today, it is worth saying that Members of the UK Youth Parliament had an awful lot to say to us about the important role of youth services in media literacy. So that needs to be taken into account and we will try to find some way of raising that with DCMS. It clearly mattered a lot to them and was working well for them. Can I come to you, Lord Mitchell, now?

**Q283 Lord Mitchell:** Thank you, Chair. You may or may not believe what I am going to say now, but I have been involved in digital information technology, both as an entrepreneur and now in the House of Lords, for more than 50 years—in fact, closer to 60 than 50.

**Lord Knight of Weymouth:** No!

**Lord Mitchell:** I know, it is hard to believe. There are patterns that occur over periods of time. The pattern that has always struck me throughout is the dominance of the American entrepreneurial companies, from IBM to where we are today. There is a way they do things, and the way you can measure it is by the amount of money, contacts and expertise they have, and the speed at which they move.

Today, it is more apparent than ever. The tech bros are running it all. The only thing I can tell you is, from my feeling, they are not our friends. They are their own friends, and we must be very careful that we do not dance to their tune. Being on this committee, we have taken evidence from lots of people and I am not yet convinced that we are being robust

enough with the powers we have at our disposal to put them in their place. We seem to be going soft all the time and I just hope we do not. I hope one of the things we can recommend as a committee is a toughening up of our actions.

With that, let me ask our question. How are the Government ensuring that other relevant stakeholders, including technology platforms and the media industry, play a role in media literacy? I will combine that with another: are we confident that technology platforms are taking media literacy seriously? Maggie?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** First, can I say that I came here straight from London Tech Week, which is happening all through this week at Olympia, and I have been doing a whole series of events there. I have got to say that the UK tech sector is thriving and growing. Whenever I go to events like this, I am hugely impressed by the entrepreneurship, the skills and the ambition that these people have. We have got a thriving UK tech sector and we need it to grow so that we are not reliant just on another country's tech—that, actually, we have our own home-grown tech sector. The Government absolutely have that in their sights. I was at a meeting this morning with overseas entrepreneurs who have come here to the UK to build their programmes. So actually we are attracting new entrepreneurs to the UK for all the right reasons. We are giving the right financial incentives and the right infrastructure. It is all happening and that has to be the future. That is in response to the first part of your question.

The second thing I would say is, yes, the tech sectors have to step up to their responsibility in terms of media literacy. Of course they do. Part of the Online Safety Act requires them to provide proper media literacy support. Many are already running media literacy initiatives. Google has Be Internet Legends, Meta has Get Digital, and TikTok has Adverts, Creators and You. These are just some examples of what they are doing. Ofcom are already measuring the impact that those media literacy initiatives are having. They are also engaging with platforms under the duties to support transparency and best practice. Google, Lego, Pinterest and Roblox have signed up to its best practice principles, and I would urge other tech companies to sign up to them as well. Some of them are already doing their bit—we would argue perhaps not enough, but the expectation is there and Ofcom will in due course be holding their feet to the fire about what they are doing.

Q284 **Lord Mitchell:** Maggie, do you feel their heart is in it or are we having to pull them screaming and shouting to be doing this?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Genuinely, on the issue of online safety, which is broader than the issue of media literacy, they seem to want to help. I think they do understand that that the Online Safety Act is here and it is here to stay. Actually Ofcom, as you know, have some pretty mega penalties they can take against the tech companies if they do not comply. I have not received any suggestion from any of them yet

that they do not wish to comply and they want to make sure that they get that note of approval from Ofcom.

Without going into the whole online safety debate again, at the moment it is only just being rolled out. The illegal harms code is already in place now, and the children's code is just coming on stream now. Ofcom will be measuring whether or not they comply. I had a meeting with Meta yesterday, who were very keen to tell me everything they were doing to comply with the Online Safety Act. Somebody needs to scrutinise it; it is not my job to go through step by step and make sure that that is true, but they are certainly very keen to persuade the Government that they are complying with the Act. That is all I can say to you: that they are saying to us—and as far as I know, saying to Ofcom—that they will comply with the legislation. Now, is their heart in it? They are businesses, so they will do what is in their business interest ultimately.

**Q285 Lord Mitchell:** Have the Government considered strengthening the requirements on these platforms?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Again, that is a much broader issue but, for now, we are taking the view that we want to see the Online Safety Act rolled out in full. We have not got to that point yet. We will at some point, with Ofcom I am sure, take stock of whether or not the powers that Ofcom already have are sufficient. Do we need more powers? I would say it is premature to look at it in that light yet. It is a huge enterprise to introduce that piece of legislation. Genuinely, I think we need to give it more time to really take stock of how effective it has been. We are not ruling out doing more if we need to do more, but we want to do it with the genuine evidence in front of us as to why it is necessary.

**Q286 The Chair:** Maggie, you said, "I would urge other tech platforms to sign up". I think you were talking about best practice. Can you tell us what is the relationship between the Online Safety Act and specific requirements for media literacy on platforms? We had a meeting earlier today with Ofcom. How are they holding platforms' feet to the fire where the requirements are not mandatory? We are finding this hard to get to with them. What will actually happen? It is one thing to urge them to sign up to things. What if they do not? What will happen then? Is that something that we have already got in the Online Safety Act or that we need to add to it?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The thing that Ofcom are pursuing at the moment is their best practice principles, which they are asking people to sign up to. I think that is more of a voluntary thing, but actually there are statutory obligations on other aspects of the Online Safety Act which are now coming into force—illegal harms and the children's code.

**The Chair:** But is what they do in media literacy something we could be requiring of them?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Making sure that young people are protected and know what steps to take to make sure that they are not subject to online harms, for example, does come under the Act.

**Chloe Templeton:** At the moment, as part of the risk assessment duties on platforms for both illegal harms and child safety harms, all social media platforms—all platforms in scope of the Online Safety Act—have to consider how media literacy can contribute to that. There is no statutory duty on platforms to provide media literacy education at the moment, but it is in the Online Safety Act under the risk assessment duties. The Online Safety Act duties around media literacy were on Ofcom, so Ofcom has now got more powers to request information from platforms, engage with platforms and certainly ensure that platforms are understanding that they have a role to deliver media literacy as well. As the Minister said, a lot of funding for the civil society organisations does also come from the tech sector at the moment as well.

Q287 **The Chair:** But there is no requirement, is there? It is up to them. It is completely voluntary whether they do that or not. When you think about the profits that are being made and the fact that there need to be budgets to scale up this work, having everything on this voluntary basis just seems weak, does it not?

**Lord Knight of Weymouth:** The levy that is in the Online Safety Act against the tech companies to fund the regulatory work, or to part fund the regulatory work of Ofcom, could be used to fund media literacy. That would perfectly be within scope of the Act. Is that something that you could use, if tomorrow does not go your way, to deliver the sorts of funding that we need to achieve the media literacy at scale that we all want?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Well, I am not going to comment on whether tomorrow will go our way or not, but we would certainly work with Ofcom. I am interested in hearing you say that you took more evidence from Ofcom, but I would certainly like to hear from them whether they feel that there is a gap. If there is a gap, as I was saying earlier, then if needs be we will address it. But at the moment it is a requirement of the platforms to comply with Ofcom's strategy on media literacy. That is what Ofcom will be measuring them against.

Q288 **The Chair:** It was a briefing that we had this morning, so it is not really part of the inquiry, but it is just obviously not clear what happens next if they do not. That is what we are trying to get to: what happens if the platforms do not do this, and if it is not a requirement that they fund civil society or development of this work? I suppose what a lot of us are saying—I cannot speak for everybody—is that it should be. They are making the profits out of this. They are making the profits out of the current awful situation. It is not just a question of the safety aspect of it. They are profiting and they should be part of this work, which will actually change things for the better. That is a sense of where we are as a committee. I think Baroness Wheatcroft wants to come in.

**Baroness Wheatcroft:** It was very specifically on that point. Should there be a levy on the big tech companies to fund not just media literacy training but libraries that did media literacy training, just to take the money, as in, for instance, the gaming industry? The gaming companies are forced to put a bit into protecting people from losing too much money through gambling addiction. Should we be looking at actually taking a tougher line with the big tech businesses, because their heart just might not be in the right place?

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** There is of course in the Act provision for a levy against the tech companies to pay for the work that Ofcom is carrying out. I guess Ofcom, if they chose to, could broaden out how they defined that work that they are doing. But I do not think I am in a position to comment on whether or not there should be a wider levy than that at the current time.

Q289 **The Chair:** There are precedents, are there not, in other sectors, if you look at where large profits are being made—like arenas contributing, I think it is voluntarily at the moment, to the development of music workplaces? There are so many things where there is not the needed amount of funding for developing an area of work, so the feeling is, I think, that the big tech companies making the profits ought to be required to fund it, as we require of or have asked the arenas to do.

**Lord Knight of Weymouth:** And the logic is that the levy is there to fund the regulatory work to implement the Act. There is a duty on Ofcom to deliver on media literacy, so therefore the levy can be used to deliver on that duty on media literacy. Your money is there. Go get it.

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Look, money is a sensitive subject at the current time, so forgive me if I do not comment any further on that, but I shall look forward to your recommendations in due course.

**Chloe Templeton:** We strongly encourage the tech sector to go as far as they can on media literacy. Let us see how it goes. We have given Ofcom these more specific duties. We are engaging a lot with the tech sector on online safety in general through the Online Safety Act and media literacy. They have these very wide-ranging new online safety duties coming in. But I would encourage them to sign up to the best practice principles that Ofcom have produced. If the situation changes and it becomes a gap, then of course that is something Government can consider.

**The Chair:** Can I thank all our witnesses, but particularly the Ministers? I know that that Maggie Jones does have to go now to get to the Chamber in pretty short order. Thanks also to the officials, Matthew and Chloe, for being our witnesses today. We will move fairly soon into writing our report and report back, so we hope to get that out, as Government Ministers often say, in the summer sometime. Thanks very much.