

Into Film—written evidence (MLI0041)

House of Lords Communications and Digital Select Committee inquiry: Media literacy

About Into Film

1. Into Film is the UK's leading charity for film in education and the community. We provide screen industry careers information and advice, support young filmmakers, and bring the power of moving image storytelling into classroom teaching. We also run the annual Into Film Festival which enables more than 400,000 pupils to visit the cinema for free, and the Into Film Awards - the UK's leading showcase for young filmmaking talent.
2. The core Into Film programme is free for UK state schools, colleges and other youth settings, thanks to support from the BFI, awarding National Lottery good cause funding, and through other key funders including Cinema First and Northern Ireland Screen. This programme reaches over half the schools in the UK. We also run the annual Into Film Festival which enables more than 350,000 pupils to visit the cinema for free, and the Into Film Awards, the UK's leading industry-supported showcase for young filmmaking talent.

Executive summary

3. Into Film seeks to ensure that every young person in the UK has the opportunity to become not only an informed media consumer but also a confident, creative, and responsible creator.
4. To help achieve this, Into Film is dedicated to advancing media literacy through film and moving image storytelling. In the context of an ever-evolving media landscape, where video content pervades every sphere of young people's lives, our work demonstrates the transformative potential of film as a medium and the moving image for critical thinking, empathetic understanding, creative expression, and informed citizenship. This submission outlines robust evidence and recommendations for improving media literacy in the UK, in particular by embedding media literacy into our education system. It draws on both our extensive programme experience and insights from sector partners, arguing for a comprehensive, cross-curricular framework, improved teacher training, and sustainable access to creative content in order to equip learners with the essential skills for the 21st century.

Background

5. Media literacy is no longer a supplementary skill but a fundamental life competency. With 82% of 16–24-year-olds receiving most of their news via social media platforms,¹ it is imperative that educational frameworks evolve to equip young people to critically assess, produce, and interact with media. The rapid democratisation of film and video, driven by technological advances and ubiquitous mobile devices, presents unique challenges and opportunities.
6. The integration of film and video content into the curriculum can engage learners, removes barriers to learning, supports comprehension and help to develop creative skills. But, in addition, routinely teaching visual literacy and critical digital literacy skills through the use of film in the classroom, helps children and young people to develop the skills required to avoid the In risks associated with misinformation, cyberbullying, and the harmful effects of deepfakes. This submission builds on these insights to advance a set of policy recommendations for the committee to consider that would bolster current educational and industrial strategies.
7. Beyond Into Film’s organisational experience, academic research has long underlined the urgency of developing children’s media competencies. Professor Sonia Livingstone, a leading scholar in media literacy and children’s digital rights, has argued that young people need not only access to technology but also the critical capacities to understand, interpret, and respond to the media they encounter. Her work consistently highlights the gap between young people’s high exposure to digital media and their ability to navigate it critically and safely. This discrepancy underscores the urgent need for a systemic approach to media education that equips all learners with lifelong skills for digital citizenship. Into Film has drawn on the work of Professor Livingstone and other leading academics in this field in our own approach to media literacy.

The role and impact of film in medial literacy

8. Film is a unique and dynamic vehicle for learning. It allows young people to engage directly with visual storytelling and narrative construction and deepens their understanding of media production and analysis. The filming and editing of video content is a commonplace activity for many young people as they navigate online platforms. Both for those who already engage with film and video content in this way and those who do not, providing an informed, guided approach to how they make and understand this content is of enormous value. Through doing this, young people gain considered firsthand experience in how media messages are constructed. This process fosters a critical appreciation of how narratives

¹<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/tv-radio-and-on-demand-research/tv-research/news/news-consumption-2024/news-consumption-in-the-uk-2024-report.pdf?v=379621>

are framed to influence audiences, an insight essential for deciphering both traditional and digital media messages.

9. Engagement in filmmaking not only builds important technical skills but also empowers young people to articulate and share their views, enabling greater civic participation. At Into Film, we use filmmaking to foster debate and discussion on pressing societal issues, reinforcing the link between media literacy and active participation in society. Our programmes and workshops cover the responsibilities, ethics, and safe online practices that young people need to be aware of when they create and share content. This is crucial for helping navigate the digital world responsibly, reducing risks associated with online sharing and their exposure to both the harmful content and chances of producing harmful content themselves.
10. Into Film provides teacher training, filmmaking projects and classroom resources that aim to support the development of children and young people's media and information literacy and critical digital literacy skills that are based on the evidence base for best practice in this area, including Ofcom's Outcomes Framework. Our programmes embrace the five outcomes of quality media literacy programmes for children and young people as set out by this Framework.²
11. To inform both our approach and advocacy to support improving media literacy, we are part of coalitions and evidence gathering groups including Ofcom's Making Sense of Media Coalition and the Media and Information Literacy Alliance.

Challenges for improving media literacy

12. Despite the promise of media literacy initiatives, several barriers must be overcome. These include funding and resource limitations, which mean many initiatives face financial constraints that inhibit long-term planning and impact, and sustainable investment is crucial to scale innovative programmes.
13. There is also inconsistency across the four nations and curricular gaps in England in particular. As highlighted in the recent Interim Report of the Curriculum and Assessment Review for England, there is a pressing need for the formal inclusion of media literacy across the curriculum. It is worth quoting the relevant paragraph within context in which the recommendation is made:

Subject specific knowledge remains the best investment we have to secure the education young people need in a world of rapid technological and social change. Being secure in foundational subjects such as maths and science will remain pivotal, now and in the future;

² <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/making-sense-of-media/evaluate/toolkit/outcomes-indicators-and-survey-questions-bank.pdf?v=379341#:~:text=The%20outcomes%20bank%20includes%2024%20outcomes%20structured%20around,from%20harm.%20Area%203%3A%20Critical%20thinking%20about%20content.>

as will young people's understanding of human culture through the humanities, languages and arts. **However, attention is needed to address opportunities and challenges created by our fast-changing world. The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and trends in digital information demand heightened media literacy and critical thinking, as well as digital skills.**³

14. Further, socioeconomic disparities exacerbate digital divides, affecting access to paid-for content and resources. This inequality undermines efforts to democratise digital knowledge and media literacy efforts.

Policy recommendations

15. Drawing on our experience, Into Film proposes the following key recommendations:
16. **A new cross-curricular framework should be introduced for media literacy in England:** The Committee should support proposals for the Department for Education to develop a comprehensive framework for media literacy, setting clear outcomes for each Key Stage. This framework should draw on other successful models have been implemented to integrate media literacy (and related competencies) have been embedded across curricula. The Committee will rightly examine efforts to improve media literacy internationally but should also consider the innovative work already in progress in the UK's devolved nations. For example, policymakers in Wales have already incorporated Digital Competencies as part of the Welsh cross-curricular skills framework alongside Literacy and Numeracy, which is in addition to adding Film and Digital Media as a recognised discipline within its new curriculum. The competencies outlined complement and buttress many of the skills and competencies needed to be media literate, and the Committee should examine Wales as a model for how Digital Competence Framework (which although not the same as what might be implemented for a media literacy framework, would align in key areas) weaves digital skills throughout the curriculum from primary to secondary.
17. **Media literacy should be part of enhanced teacher training and professional development:** The Committee should recommend the embedding of media literacy into both Initial Teacher Training and ongoing professional development. All educators should be equipped with accredited training resources developed in partnership with bodies such as the Media and Information Literacy Alliance and Internet Matters. Into Film would be able to provide support and evidence-based guidance for the central role of the appreciation, understanding and making of film and moving image content during the design of this training, based on training we currently provide to educators ourselves. Included in this training should be modules that cover contemporary issues including

³https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67e6b43596745eff958ca022/Curriculum_and_Assessment_Review_interim_report.pdf

digital safety, AI-generated content, and deepfake recognition, aligning with recent guidance from UNESCO and other international bodies.

18. **Access to licensed and age-appropriate content should be retained and enhanced:** The Committee should recommend that all state schools have ongoing access to a broad range of free, licensed, relevant and age-appropriate film and video content. This is critical to provide students with safe and diverse material for study and creative projects, generating economies of scale for schools and allowing for educational materials and resources to be integrated into content platforms. A good example of this is Into Film's own Into Film+ streaming platform that has hundreds of titles that are accompanied by teacher resources. Into Film recently (March 2025) worked with one of our partners, Netflix to place their groundbreaking series, *Adolescence* onto Into Film+ so that it can be accessed for free by teachers wanting to use it in age and subject-appropriate classroom contexts alongside teaching resources and information from other charities and organisations with deep expertise on issues relevant to the series. Although *Adolescence* is a recent high-profile example, Into Film takes this rigorous and evidence-led approach to all the content and resources provided on Into Film+ for use by teachers in the classroom.
19. **Relevant Government Departments should invite and encourage industry collaboration and explore public-private endeavours:** The Committee should recommend that collaborative projects between the creative industries, educational bodies, and government be launched to urgently increase awareness and skills around media literacy. From how the algorithms effect what a person sees on social media to how AI is transforming visual media creation, the actions of private companies are fundamental to the future of the type of media literacy young people require to when they consume, create or share content. As referenced in paragraph 18, Into Film recently worked alongside Netflix, the Department for Education, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Cabinet Office to ensure that *Adolescence*, accompanied by teaching resources, was made available for teachers who may wish to use the powerful series in the classroom. Not only is the use of a drama that has sparked national conversations an excellent example of public-private collaboration to support improving media literacy, but the content of *Adolescence* itself deals directly with media literacy as one of its many themes.
20. **More guidance on legal and ethical best practices should be provided:** The Committee should recommend that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport should work alongside the Department for Education to support the development of comprehensive guidance for educators and young people. This guidance should address the legal and ethical dimensions of media production and consumption, helping to mitigate risks such as misinformation and cyberbullying. It is welcome that a new Digital, AI and Technology Task and Finish Group has now been formed to advise on "how the school and college education system in England can ensure that every child and young person is equipped to thrive in an AI and digital world, creating strong foundations for access

to more specialist AI and digital pathways and making the most of the opportunities to use AI and educational technology to drive better teaching and learning.”⁴ We recommend that the Committee directly engage with the members of this new group as part of this inquiry.

21. **Endeavours should be inclusive:** The Committee should recommend initiatives to improve media literacy are accessible to all young people, with particular focus on disadvantaged communities and learners with SEND. Inclusive practices will help both bridge digital divides and empower every learner with the skills to navigate and contribute to the media and digital landscape.

Conclusion

22. Into Film’s experience demonstrates that film and moving image-based media literacy is a powerful tool for equipping young people with the critical and creative skills necessary to engage with our digital age both effectively and ethically. Into Film’s work, in conjunction with insights from broader research and the efforts of sector partners, confirms that embedding media literacy into the lives of young people can drive both educational and social benefits, from strengthening democratic participation to sparking professional opportunities in an expanding creative sector.
23. The recommendations outlined above, which are grounded in empirical evidence, international best practices, and practical experience, offer a clear roadmap for transforming media literacy education. With sustained funding, a coherent curricular framework, robust teacher training, and cross-sector collaboration, the next generation will be better prepared to critically engage with a rapidly evolving media landscape.
24. Into Film remains committed to supporting the Government, Parliament and educational stakeholders in this vital transformation. We welcome further dialogue and collaboration to implement these recommendations.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/young-people-to-benefit-from-creative-education-boost>

Appendix: References

- [Cross-curricular skills frameworks - Curriculum for Wales](#)
- [Evaluating Media Literacy with a Theory of Change - The Centre for Excellence in Media Practice Bournemouth University \(2023\)](#)
- [Journey through the MILtiverse: media and information literacy toolkit for youth organizations - UNESCO \(2024\)](#)
- [Navigating the infodemic with MIL: media and information literacy - UNESCO \(2023\)](#)
- [News consumption in the UK: 2024 - Ofcom \(2024\)](#)
- [Operational guidelines: constructing UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Cities - UNESCO \(2024\)](#)
- [The Impact of Media and Information Literacy on Students' Acquisition of the Skills Needed to Detect Fake News - Journal of Media Literacy Education \(2022\)](#)
- [The Media Literacy Index 2023 - Open Society Institute Sofia \(2023\)](#)
- [What's the best we can expect of media literacy? From protectionism to human rights and flourishing – Professor Sonia Livingstone \(2023\)](#)

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