

Minutes of the Cross-Party Group on Digital Participation @ The Scottish Parliament
31 October 2017

Attendees:

- Willie Coffey MSP
- Liam McCarthy MSP
- Jonathan Ruff (Ofcom)
- Mark Damos (BT)
- Mairi MacLeod (Communications Consumer Panel)
- David Walls (Director, Lothian Broadband Networks Ltd)
- Michael Fourman (Professor, Edinburgh University)
- Mike McGregor (Individual)
- Adrienne Chalmers (Individual)
- Bridget Stevens (Tap-Into-IT)
- Peter Guthrie (HIE)
- Stuart Young (ETIVE)
- David Amos (Renfrewshire Council)
- Paul Cameron (Renfrewshire Council)
- Colin Foskett (Blackwood Group)
- Kyle Usher (SCVO)
- Alyson Mitchell (Scottish Government)
- Maggie Ellis (EKTG)
- Francesca McGrath (SPICE)
- Jenny Foreman
- Anna Grant (Carnegie Trust)

Agenda

1. Opening remarks and Introductions (Willie Coffey MSP)
2. The Tallinn Declaration (Maggie Ellis)
3. Ofcom's Communications Market Report (Jonathan Ruff)
4. 'Fighting Fake News' with the Information Literacy Community of Practice (Jenny Foreman)
5. Carnegie Trust UK Digital Participation Update (Anna Grant)
6. AOB

1. Opening remarks and introductions (Willie Coffey MSP)

- 1.1. WC welcomed those attending and raised that himself, JR, and LM had held the group's AGM and that JR had circulated a note from it on suggested topics for the group to cover. These topics were mainly focused towards digital inclusion with some on digital skills. WC invited members to reply to Jonny with any suggestions for topics the group could cover.
- 1.2. WC also asked for any suggestions as to how to engage the wider Parliament. He said that we don't always get high MSP attendance of the meetings but whenever digital

participation is discussed in Parliament there is a high level of engagement. Suggested the possibility of holding a lobbying event.

2. The Tallinn Declaration – Maggie Ellis

- 2.1. ME raised a query about the Tallinn Declaration. She said that she had tried to contact Lord O'Sheanesay who signed the declaration on the UK's behalf to clarify what its purpose is. ME is concerned that there have been additional documents added to the declaration.
- 2.2. WC said that the declaration appears to be an affirmation of commitment to the Digital Single Market and its principles. Said that there is a question of the UK's position after Brexit however feels that we should stay in the Digital Single Market.
- 2.3. Agreed for WC to send a query to Scottish Government and Lord O'Sheanesay asking about the declaration and what Scotland's role in it is.
- 2.4. WC suggested whether the group may want to invite international experts to present.

3. Ofcom's Communications Market Report – Jonathan Ruff

- 3.1. JR made the group aware of the Communications Market Report that Ofcom produced this year which examines how consumers use communications services. The report is produced annually and can be found on Ofcom's website. Any questions contact Jonathan. Ofcom also produces an infrastructure report which is published annually at the end of the year.

4. Fighting Fake News – Jenny Foreman

- 4.1. Presentation given on fake news online by Jenny Foreman from the Information Literacy Community Practice.
- 4.2. The presentation gave examples of how fake news can spread online. JF also demonstrated how several fact-checking websites and other organisations are tackling the issue including: Ferret Fact Service; Full Fact; snopes.com; PolitiFact; Google, who have begun showing where websites have been fact checked; factcheck.org; Facebook, which allows you to report things as fake news; and WikiTRIBUNE, an online news service about to be launch by Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales.
- 4.3. JF also raised that DCMS are currently undertaking an enquiry into Fake News.
- 4.4. During questions/discussion, the following points were raised:
 - MD commented that we see false 'facts' being circulated in public policy debates. Not just extreme 'Trumpisms', but questionable statistics are commonly repeated. Said that these can be hard to refute.
 - Some expressed scepticism of Wikipedia. JF clarified that the WikiTRIBUNE will not follow the Wikipedia model of having users contribute to articles and will be written by established journalists, but argued that Wikipedia does have fact checkers. Some members argued that it is easier to spread fake news on Facebook than Wikipedia.

Wikipedia can remove content if there is no source and keeps a log of what edits are made.

- LM said that we've seen partisan fact checkers claim that what the opposition say is false. Suggested that sometimes it's debatable what the facts are and the spectrum that fact checking websites use is sometimes where political leanings play a part.
- ME said there are more spam calls in Scotland than London. WC commented that these things often have a plausible element to pull people in and asked if there had been any research done it to that aspect.
- MF raised the issue of auditability and accountability. Said that Estonia have a digital history of who has accessed medical data and citizens also have a digital identity. Asked what is needed to make the internet safer and suggested that traceability is important.
- Some members suggested that this is where Open Data plays a role. An example was given of Denmark, where citizens have all their records from the state in a digital identity in one place. ME said that she has been pushing for open access records for some time now. Said that Estonia has had open access records for 12 years and has not had any problems. ME said that she worries that any hospital in Scotland can access her information which she argued could be more dangerous.
- WC said that EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will come into force next May and will address some of these issues around data security. MF said GDPR is good but doesn't make clear the technologies available or mandate accessibility. Argued that we need to improve accountability. Said that you have some traceability on the likes of Wikipedia but not on Facebook, however the issue of fake identities on both remains.
- Members argued that it can be hard to know where fake news originates as people don't have to give their identities. Referred again to Estonia and said that Mydex is a company that has been working on digital identities. Said that the technology is available and gave Alex Stowbart as an example of someone working in this area.
- WC was asked about political fact checking. Members wondered if politicians need to try to re-establish the validity of experts. WC said that the public are becoming increasingly sceptical and that people always present things from their point of view but should avoid manipulation.
- Questions were raised about whether fact checking websites can identify photoshopped images? JF responded that some websites do check images, but doesn't know how. LM raised the issue that while there are tools to fact check information and photos, by the time this has been done they have already been circulated online.
- AC wondered what happens at schools to explain manipulation on social media. Members asked if more could be done to educate about fake news. JF praised the work of school librarians in this area and argued this is why schools need to continue to have trained librarians. JR raised that Ofcom has published research on children's media literacy and will send round a link of the report.

5. Carnegie Trust UK Digital Participation Update (Anna Grant)

5.1. Anna Grant presented two reports: "*Digitally Savvy Citizens*" and "*A Digital World for All?*".

5.2. *Digitally Savvy Citizens*

- Showed behaviours online split by region and demographics.
- Different generations found to have different habits and skills
- Argued that need more targeted services and interventions.
- Said that the metrics used to access digital skills are fast changing and need to be updated e.g. using location settings.

5.3. *A Digital World for All?*

- A significant minority of young people in the UK don't have adequate digital skills.
- Carnegie Trust were involved in a programme which targeted different groups of vulnerable young people and aimed to help improve their digital skills.
- The report found that:
 - Young people may over report their digital skills.
 - Adult support networks could also benefit from digital upskilling.
 - Things such as introducing high-tech kit encouraged engagement.
 - Concluded that the issue is complex but needs further attention and investment.

5.4. During the questions/discussion, the following points were raised:

- WC asked by who's standards were digital skills being assessed? AG said that they confess some guilt for imposing Carnegie's view of what constituted digital skills, however there were important areas such as privacy where they saw low awareness. Need a compromise between how young people use technology and what is needed.
- ME asked what the older age bracket was as believes there is now some evidence that grandparents are pushed by their grandchildren to engage more with new technologies and are more technically able than 55-65 year olds. AG said that older age group is 55 and above. Said there has been some more targeted research looking younger age groups supporting and teaching older age groups.
- Discussed what it was about the high-tech kit that meant that younger age groups became more engaged. Suggested that it allows for creativity and gives younger people a level of responsibility. MF worried that focus on kit may not work to attract women to get involved, as has been seen in computing. PC said that generally find that enthusiastic people are the most effective tool at getting other people engaged.
- AG said that didn't look at gender divide overall but did note specific instances where males and females reacted differently. For instance, teenage girls engaged more when one session introduced a director on Hollyoaks. Some member expressed an interest in results showing what worked well as they said it is a challenge for industry to get young

people engaged, particularly women. AG said that the Carnegie Trust are continuing work in this area and gender divides may be an area to consider.

- PG asked whether the issue of rurality had been looked at and said that it can be hard to develop digital skills without the appropriate infrastructure. AG accepted that research did focus on urban areas and said that the issue of digital skills in rural areas had been raised before however didn't know where the future sessions will be targeted.

6. AOB:

- 6.1. WC thanked members for their time and reminded them to feedback on AGM note with suggestions on what issues they feel the group should tackle and what actions it should undertake.
- 6.2. Electronic copies of both presentations to be circulated. Along with links to the Carnegie Trust publications as well as Ofcom's Communications Market Report and Children's Media Lives Report.
- 6.3. Hoping to have another meeting before Christmas. Request for members to feedback about dates.