



**SOUK**  
SHOUT OUT UK

# YOUR GUIDE TO MEDIA LITERACY & PREVENT

*Shout Out UK (SOUK) is a multi-award winning education platform and creative social enterprise. Fusing education and tech with film production and animation ensures we create world-class programmes on Media & Political Literacy and high impact Democratic Engagement campaigns.*

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## Intro



**Shout Out UK (SOUK)** is a multi-award winning education platform and creative social enterprise. Fusing education and tech with film production and animation ensures we create world-class programmes on Media & Political Literacy and high impact Democratic Engagement campaigns.

Media Literacy is the framework we use to analyse messages that we find online and offline. We can build this framework by developing critical thinking skills and emotional resilience, to be able to resist the emotive messaging that is used to spread mis and disinformation.

Having a strong understanding of media literacy can help you understand fact from fiction. This book will cover a wide range of topics to explain issues across media literacy and how to develop your own skills.



[www.shoutoutuk.org](http://www.shoutoutuk.org)

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Look out for toolboxes like this one for useful free online tools to help you. This one goes to our website so you can find out more about us.



## 2. Mis, Dis and Malinformation

### KEY TERMS

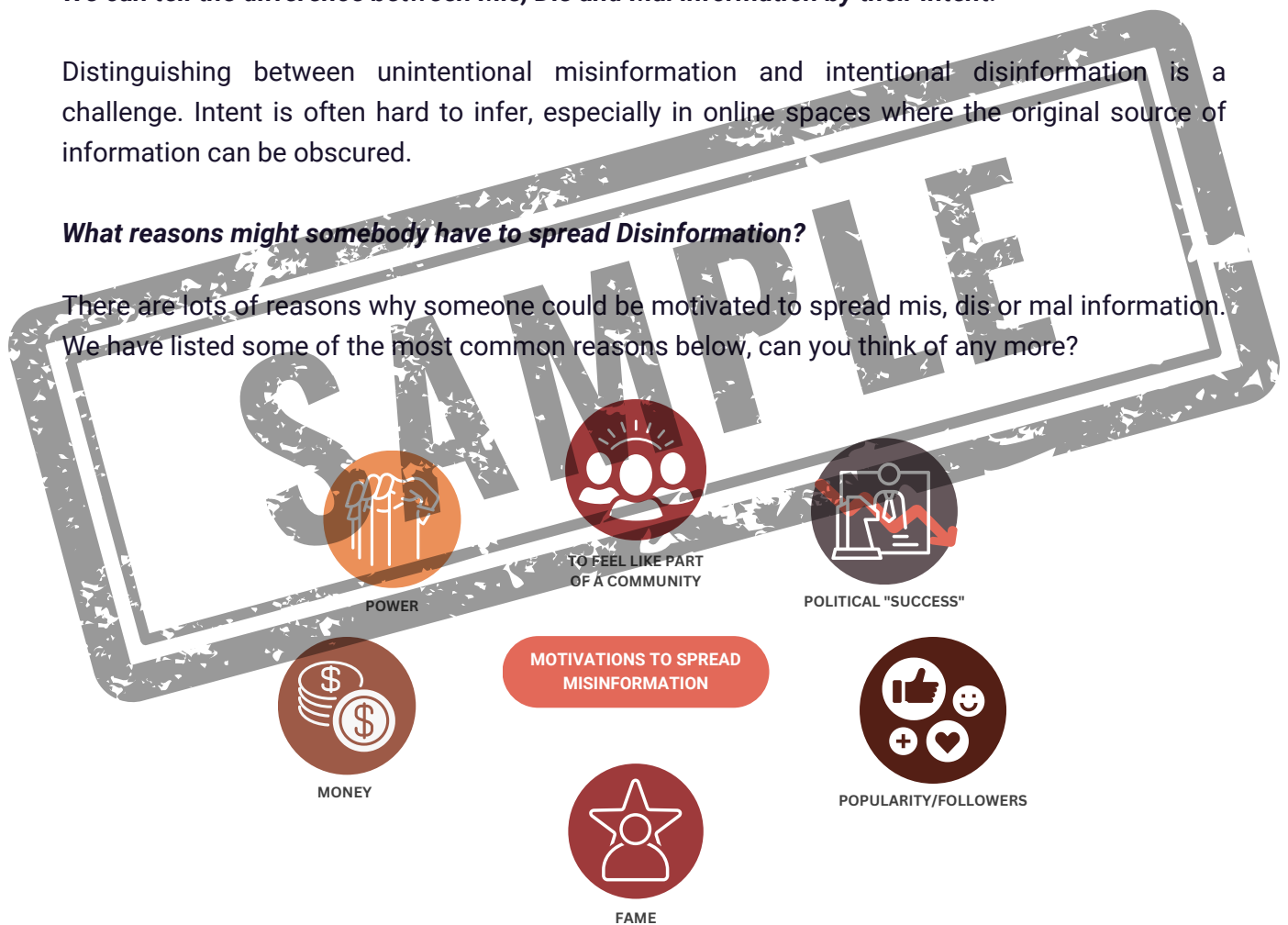
- *Misinformation*: Information that is false and is spread by mistake without the intention of causing harm.
- *Disinformation*: Creating false information and sharing it to deliberately cause harm to a person, group, or organisation.
- *Malinformation*: Information that is true but missing key context, to present facts in a way that makes it misleading.

**We can tell the difference between Mis, Dis and Mal information by their intent.**

Distinguishing between unintentional misinformation and intentional disinformation is a challenge. Intent is often hard to infer, especially in online spaces where the original source of information can be obscured.

**What reasons might somebody have to spread Disinformation?**

There are lots of reasons why someone could be motivated to spread mis, dis or mal information. We have listed some of the most common reasons below, can you think of any more?



### **Disinformation, Misinformation and Memes**

Very often we find that people share information which isn't true. This can be done for a variety of reasons. One of the most common ways that people spread misinformation is through memes. By making you laugh, angry or sad, you will be more likely to share it (Basch, et al 2021).

Memes are often used to spread disinformation and misinformation. Furthermore, memes are often difficult to analyse, as much of the information can be sarcastic or require contextual understanding (Naseem, et al 2023).

This is where working out the intent is important. Sometimes people spread misinformation through memes simply because they think it's funny and haven't fact checked. Whereas extremist groups will sometimes use memes as a means to spread disinformation (Smith, 2019).

Some extreme groups such as the far right, incels and the far left have been using memes strategically to spread their ideology on mainstream platforms.

These groups take complex and radical ideologies and condense them into memes, making them more appealing and easy to share online. They use humour and irony to hide their extreme views and make them seem more acceptable. By doing this, they hope to reach a larger audience, including younger people. A study on tiktok helped to prove this. The study found that out of 100 trending videos on the Covid vaccine, a significant number of them actually discouraged vaccine uptake, and were more likely to be viewed as they were using humour to convey their message (Basch, et al 2021).



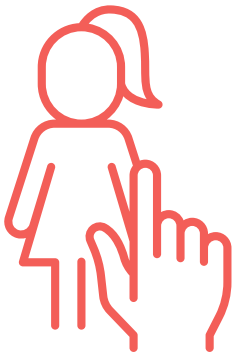
Using the case of the far right, researchers have found that exposure to these extreme right-wing memes can have negative effects (Fielitz & Ahmed, 2021). They may lower the barriers that prevent people from accepting violent or racist beliefs, and when people see these memes over and over again, they might start to think that hateful or violent ideas are acceptable.

It's important to note that not all memes are explicitly violent, hateful, or racist. Sometimes, they may seem harmless on the surface. For example, the meme 'Pepe the Frog' might look innocent to someone who doesn't know its context.

Therefore it's important to take the context of the post into consideration. Some people may share a meme simply because they think it's funny. Extremists also use this format to spread their message to seem innocent.

One example of this is the "Yes Chad" meme. Among the extreme right this phrase is used on a variety of social media platforms. It is often used as a symbol to promote white culture, to undermine leftist politics or express racist views. However, some people simply use it innocently as a punchline to a joke, where the "chad" represents the best option in a choice.

So, when we come across memes, it's important to think critically and consider the messages they might be conveying. Not all memes are harmless jokes, and some can promote harmful



## ***Deepfakes & Sexual Violence - Digital Trafficking***

Deepfakes can take the form of manipulated videos. They can harm people by depicting them in explicit situations they never consented to. From major film productions to internet memes, deep fakes have begun to permeate the internet. According to a 2019 report 96% of deep fakes posted online are pornographic in nature, 90% of all deepfake pornography is of women (Sample, 2020.)

Deepfake sexual violence poses significant dangers and ethical concerns in today's digital age. These manipulated videos and images, created using artificial intelligence, can deceive viewers into believing that non-consensual and explicit acts have occurred. The implications are deeply disturbing as they violate privacy, consent, and the well-being of individuals involved.

Young people are being exposed to pornography younger and younger, 50% of young people watching porn. This creates an unhealthy view of how sex and relationships work in reality compared to how they are depicted online.

### ***Case study: Helen Mort***

British poet Helen Mort was told by an acquaintance that naked photos of her were on a pornography website (Hao, 2021). This was despite the fact that Mort had never taken explicit pictures. These maliciously manipulated videos, created using artificial intelligence, depicted Helen engaging in sexual acts she had never consented to (Jackson 2021).



Photos of Helen were created, and then using AI spliced onto the body of actresses in porn. The AI was capable of recreating identifiable marks, copying her tattoos. Immediately Helen went to the police to find an appropriate course of action. She found that there was nothing that could be done as although revenge porn is illegal deepfake porn is not (Hao, 2021).

By learning about Helen's story, we can understand the emotional impact and the importance of addressing this issue. Helen Mort said in response "It really makes you feel powerless, like you are being put in your place."

At the time of writing the Evening Standard has reported that the UK government has announced plans to make pornographic deep fakes shared online illegal. Under the current plan this will be passed with the Online Safety Bill.

## ■ 4. Conspiracy Theories

Whilst conspiracy theories often seem funny and ridiculous, the communities that believe a conspiracy can, in extreme cases, promote violent and extremist behaviour.

Conspiracy theorists will also sometimes use disinformation to spread their theory. In some cases conspiracy theorists will rely on your preconceived notions and stereotypes to spread their disinformation. In a number of different conspiracies, these stereotypes are often made to seem far more modern and ignore historical connotations.

In order to justify and spread their claims, conspiracy theorists will in a handful of cases, manipulate truthful facts to advance their own narratives. These claims generally stem from a “nugget of truth”, to initially justify their beliefs. For example, some people that believe in the great replacement theory will use declining white birth rates as a means to justify xenophobia (Ekman, 2022). This is often purported despite both a lack of evidence for a worldwide conspiracy, and an array of available counter-evidence.

In some cases, conspiracy theorists will cherry-pick or twist facts, fabricate evidence, and rely on logical fallacies to create a sense of doubt or mistrust. The claims are then spread through social media, using echo chambers and sensationalist tactics to propagate and reaffirm their beliefs (Douglas et al, 2019). Conspiracy theorists do this without discussing these topics with people from opposing viewpoints, exploiting uncertainty and promoting an alternative reality devoid of verifiable evidence.

We often see a difference between conventional and conspiratorial thinking. We have listed some of the traits of these kinds of thinking below.

- **Conventional Thinking:** Healthy scepticism, Responsive to evidence, Strives for coherence → Actual Conspiracy
- **Conspiratorial Thinking:** Overriding suspicion, Over-interpreting evidence, Contradictory → Imagined Conspiracy

### **What is a Conspiracy Theory?**

The definitions provided highlight the importance of defining key terms when discussing conspiracy theories. A "conspiracy" is a secret plot by powerful actors aiming to gain power, violate rights, withhold secrets, or alter institutions (Farinelli, 2021).

Conspiracy theories attempt to explain significant social and political events by alleging secret plots involving powerful actors. They can target any perceived powerful and malevolent group, not just governments (Douglas, et al 2019). For example, conspiracy theories about 9/11 accuse multiple entities like the Bush administration, the Saudi Government, corporations, and the Jews. Similarly, conspiracy theories about climate change accuse scientists, Communists, the United Nations, Democrats, the government, and the oil industry, among others. While a conspiracy

refers to an actual causal chain of events, a conspiracy theory is an allegation that may or may not be true.

It's worth noting that the term "conspiracy theory" has a history and has been subject to critique regarding its usage. For further exploration, you can refer to McKenzie-McHarg (2018) for a history of the term and Walker (2018) for a critique of its usage.

- **S(Simplistic reasoning):** Conspiracy theories often rely on oversimplified or overly complex explanations to support their claims. They may offer simple solutions to complex problems or propose intricate webs of conspirators without sufficient evidence or logical coherence.
- **C(Confirmation bias):** Conspiracy theories often rely on your own biases to sell the theory. This is because everyone is less likely to question sources that fit into our pre existing beliefs.
- **A(Adaptation):** Conspiracy theories will often adapt to evidence designed to debunk the theory. For instance, some Flat Earthers claim that Mars is round as it has been observed to be but will still claim that the earth is flat. (Matyszczyk, 2017)
- **M(mistrust):** Being overly sceptic of institutions, and public figures that are perceived to be powerful. We can often identify conspiracies through overly sceptical rhetoric.

### ***What is Pre and De Bunking***

**Pre-bunking** is how we can make sure that people are less likely to believe a conspiracy theory. This will be the process of utilising our critical thinking skills and breaking down a conspiracy theory in order to identify the contradictions and apply scientific theory to test the validity of the theory. Teaching people how to spot false claims before encountering them. (Sky News, 2023)

When someone comes to believe a conspiracy theory, we often have to disprove the theory to the person who has fallen for it. In order to do this we undertake a process called "debunking".

### ***How to Pre-bunk***



Prebunking is a similar concept to vaccines. The idea is to provide a micro-dose of the conspiracy theory or extremist group to debunk claims and spot misinformation at the first point of contact.

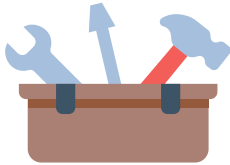
- **Media Literacy:** Introducing a strong media literacy skill set is key to helping people understand the trends and key arguments behind conspiracy theories. Allowing them to develop the tools to debunk misinformation early.
- **Fact checking:** making sure that young people know how to effectively fact check. Make people aware of the claims and tropes they will likely hear from proponents of the theory you are trying to debunk (European Commission, 2023).
- **Identify the common trends** between conspiracy theories (e.g. overly suspicious, immune to evidence, reinterpreting random patterns, etc.).



## 5. Extremism

### What is Extremism?

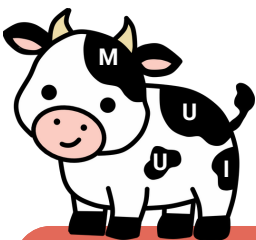
Extremism is defined by the British Government as “Vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs” (Home Office, 2021).



*There is a list of proscribed groups provided by the Home Office. If someone in your care is a member of these groups, take the steps in your organisations safeguarding policy*

### KEY TERMS

- **The Rule of Law** - The principle that the creation of laws, their enforcement, and the relationships among legal rules are themselves legally regulated and equally enforced, so that no one is above the law (UK Government, 2017).
- **Indirect Democracy** - Government in which the highest power is held by the people who elect representatives (USCIS 2023). Citizens can then contact their representative over their concerns, the representatives then put these ideas forward to the government.
- **Direct democracy** - In some systems, instead of representatives, issues are decided by voters on an individual basis. This is sometimes called a 'referendum' where citizens can vote and input their thoughts. Whichever side has the most support gets actioned (Schiller, 2023).
- **Individual Liberty** - Individual liberty means each of us have the freedom to make our own choices and do what we want – as long as we still obey the law, which is decided by elected representatives (BPP Safeguarding, 2021).
- **Authoritarianism** - A form of government or leadership where power is concentrated in the hands of a single leader or a small group, and individual freedoms and rights are limited. This can include limiting freedom of speech, press, assembly, and suppressing political opposition. Decision-making is usually centralised, and citizens may have limited or no say in important matters. Authoritarianism restricts personal freedoms and can lead to a lack of transparency, accountability, and human rights protections (Linz, 2000).
- **Radicalisation** - Refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups (NSPCC, 2021).

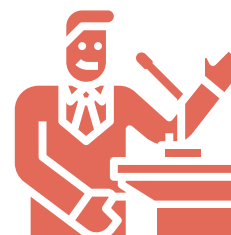


*If you see this label it means its a Mixed, Unclear, Unstable Ideology.  
Read this to find out more!*

**Mixed, Unstable and Unclear Ideology (MUUI)** is used to describe instances where people show or display a combination of elements from multiple ideologies (mixed), shift between different ideologies (unstable), or where the individual does not present a coherent ideology but may still pose a terrorism risk (Unclear) (Home Office, 2023).

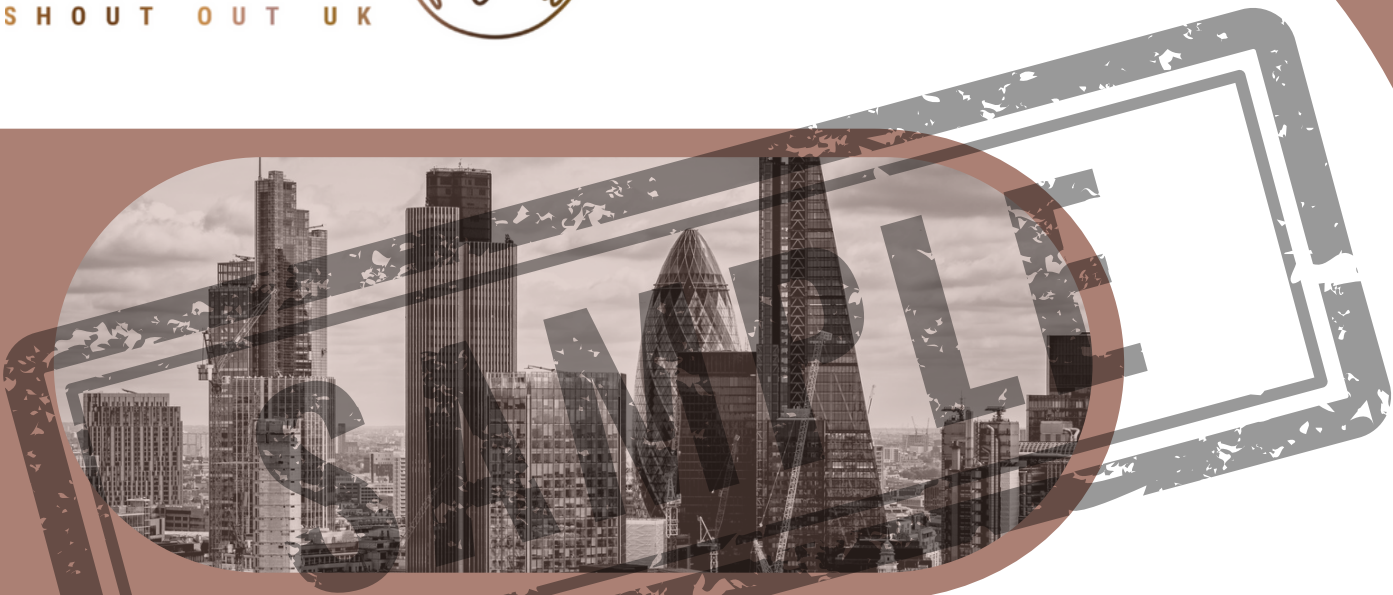
## The Far-Right

The Far-Right refers to a range of political ideologies, also often included is the Alt-right or then radical right. These groups are often characterised by Ultra Nationalist beliefs and isolationist policies. In many (but not all) cases the far right can be intolerant of other races and cultures. This can lead to a xenophobic or even racist rhetoric. In addition to this, there is often a belief in conspiracy theories (See QAnon for more information).



- **Nationalism:** Far-right ideologies often emphasise the importance of national identity and prioritise the interests of their own country or ethnic group. They may advocate for strict immigration policies and express concerns about the dilution of cultural values. Policies such as these have been pushed by the far right across Europe (Rydgren and Bar-On, 2018). It's important to note that nationalism is not inherently an extremist ideology. Plenty of people feel patriotic towards their country, however, once this starts to go against "Fundamental British Values" we would classify the views as extremist.
- **Traditionalism:** Proponents of this often reject ideals held within the modern world, such as the ability of people to advance living standards, they will also reject certain forms of progress in order to maintain what they view as timeless values (Teitelbaum, 2020). Traditionalism often has religious connotations (Sedgwick, 2021), and will support ideas held within a social hierarchy (Teitelbaum, 2020). They may resist or oppose social changes such as LGBTQ+ rights, gender equality, or multiculturalism, favouring traditional family structures and gender roles.
- **Anti-globalism:** Opposition to globalisation has historically been an issue for the left, however this shifted in the early 21st Century (Horner et al, 2018). Extremists tend to be sceptical of international organisations and agreements, perceiving them as threats to national sovereignty. The term globalists can sometimes be used as an anti-semitic trope (Walker, 2023).
- **Authoritarianism:** Both the Far-Right and the Far-Left have aspects of authoritarianism or can even become a focus of their ideology. This can include high levels of dogmatism, polarisation, and moral disengagement (Manson, 2020).
- **Ethnocentrism:** Certain far-right groups prioritise the interests and rights of a specific ethnic or racial group. This can be at the expense of other groups and act as a driving force towards discrimination against certain groups (Pickel, 2019).

It's important to note that concerns raised by the far right can often be based in genuine unease about the pace of change within the modern world, as well as a desire for strong leadership. When studying Political Ideologies it is crucial to approach them critically and engage in respectful discussions. It is also important to seek accurate information from reputable sources to understand the complexities and potential consequences of different belief systems.




*Instagram*



*Twitter*




*TikTok*

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