



PREVENTING RADICALISATION GRANT INITIATIVE 001: NORTH WALES

SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

NORTH WALES
JANUARY- MARCH 2023



Introduction

Shout Out UK (SOUK) is a multi-award winning social enterprise dedicated to increasing democratic participation and civic engagement in order to create a positive change in society. We deliver Political Literacy and Media Literacy education to young people and adults around the country, both on and offline via direct facilitation and through our signature E-portal.

We have worked in over 1,000 educational facilities since 2015 to deliver our youth programmes, and have worked in 21 councils to administer our Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Media Literacy & Extremism programme for practitioners. This experience has rendered us experts in designing programmes that engage and empower both young people and professionals to engage in active citizenship, and to develop the skills and resilience required to critically interpret information online.

The following report demonstrates our progress against the outcomes set out in the application. The programme focused mainly on students' knowledge surrounding mis, dis and malinformation, and their ability to identify and combat it with confidence. We reached 206 students from Coleg Menai and Coleg Meirion, 97% of those were English/Irish/Welsh and 3% African or Asian. To achieve our goal we translated all our assets into Welsh and edited our materials to reflect key issues in North Wales. We utilised a distance travelled methodology to determine how far students' knowledge and understanding had progressed.

The data showcased in the subsequent sections of this report highlight the key statistics achieved by our programme participants, and the full data set for our programmes can be made available as an excel attachment in addition to this report upon request.



Recruitment

To successfully meet the requirements set out in the application, we researched 57 schools and colleges, using the [WIMD](#) to examine the ideal demographics wherever possible. To support recruitment we created flyers to advertise the programme to schools and colleges. The flyer highlighted the content of our sessions and the key critical thinking skills that would be developed through their students' attendance.

During our initial recruitment, we outreached to a range of institutions. These included: mainstream education school, Special Educational Needs (SEN) institutions, Pupil Referral Unit's (PRUs) and AP's. However, despite consistent outreach we found schools and colleges to be unresponsive. With the collaboration of Anwen Hughes, Service Manager (Safeguarding and Quality) at the Isle of Anglesey County Council, we were then able to directly contact the Designated Safeguarding Leads. The Learner Services Manager of Coleg Llandrillo, Grwp Llandrillo-Menai, Alison Owen, helped facilitate the booking of 206 students in Coleg Menai and Coleg Meirion. Alison also connected us with Coleg Cambria, who showed keen interest in facilitating one of our programmes. Unfortunately, due to the short turnaround time during the delivery and Coleg Cambria's limited availability, we were unable to facilitate a programme there.

In total, we were successful in recruiting 206 students for the Media Literacy programme in North Wales. 97% of these students were English/Irish/Welsh and 3% either African or Asian.

Delivery

We delivered 24 Media Literacy sessions between the 9th and 14th of March, with each programme consisting of 3 sessions. 21 of the sessions were delivered at Coleg Menai and 3 at Coleg Meirion.

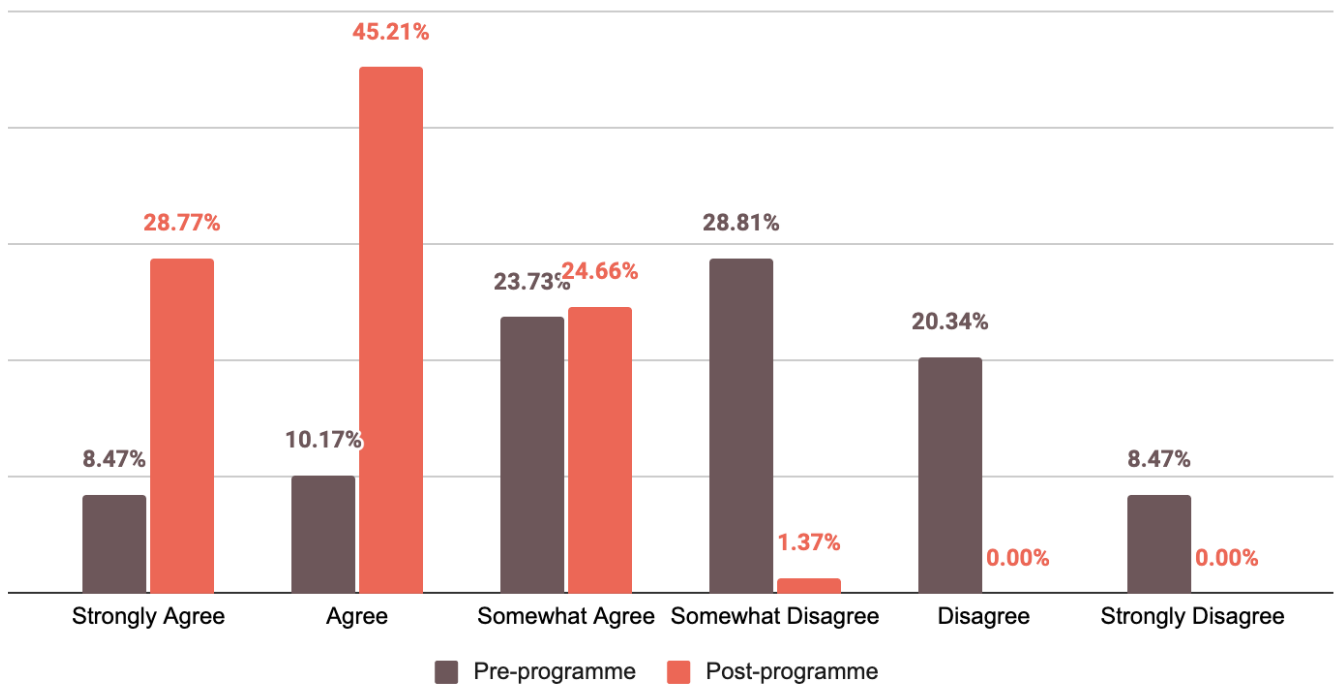
To maximise the accessibility of our programme we translated all of our assets into Welsh. To do this successfully, we used the services of Cwmni Cyfieithu Cymen Translation Company. At the request of the colleges, we delivered the three sessions back to back as one session, similar to a drop down day. The content of the programme remained the same.



The assets used within the course were tailored to be more effective in the context of North Wales. The Local Authority highlighted key issues for us to target in our programme. These mainly concerned far-right misinformation and expressions of misogyny on social media, specifically focusing on red pill ideology and Andrew Tate.

Key Statistics

Fig.1 "I am aware of how to prevent the spread of extremist disinformation online"



In our pre-programme survey, 57.52% of participants either “Somewhat Disagreed,” “Strongly Disagreed,” or “Disagreed” with the statement “I am aware of how to prevent the spread of extremist disinformation online,” while 42.37% either “Somewhat Agreed,” “Strongly Agreed,” or “Agreed.”

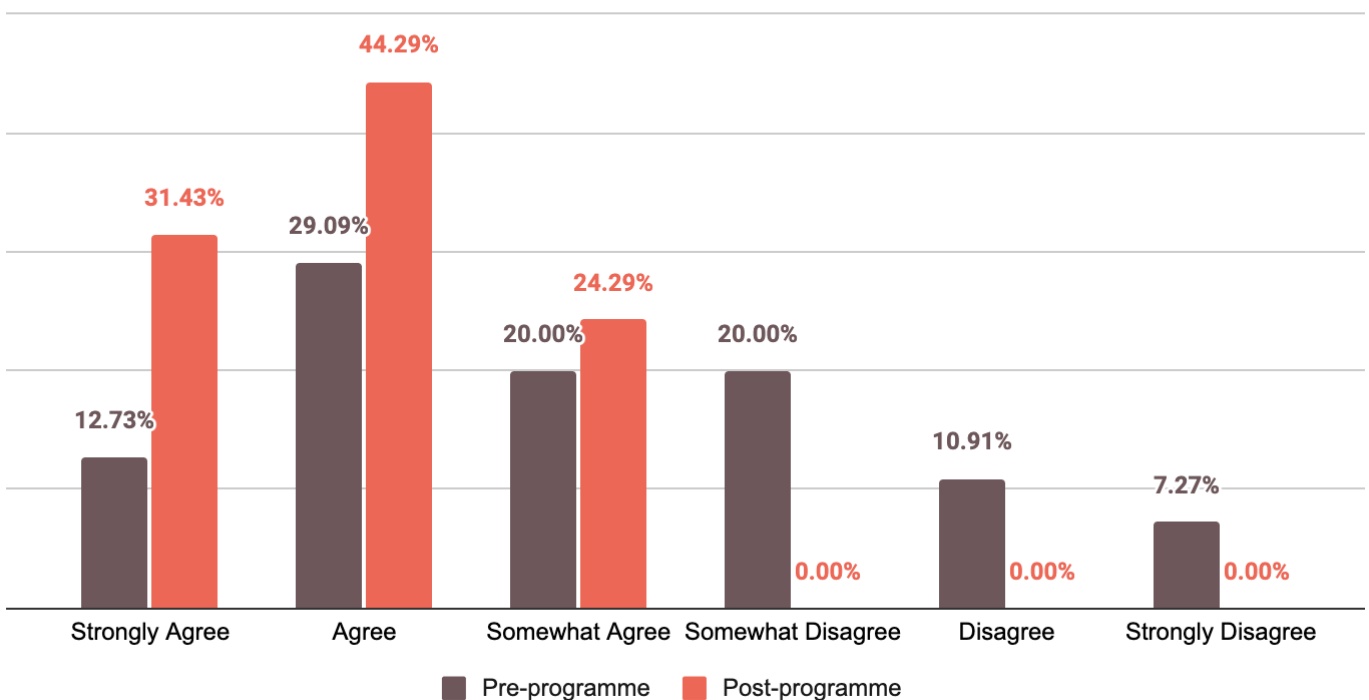
In our post-programme survey, the proportion of participants who either “Somewhat Disagreed,” “Strongly Disagreed,” or “Disagreed” with the statement made up 1.37% of all respondents, while the proportion of students who either “Somewhat Agreed,”



“Strongly Agreed,” or “Agreed” made up 98.64%.

These statistics demonstrate a significant increase in students who now feel capable to tackle extremism and extremist disinformation that they come into contact with online.

Fig.2 "I am able to prevent the spread of disinformation (intentionally sharing false information)"



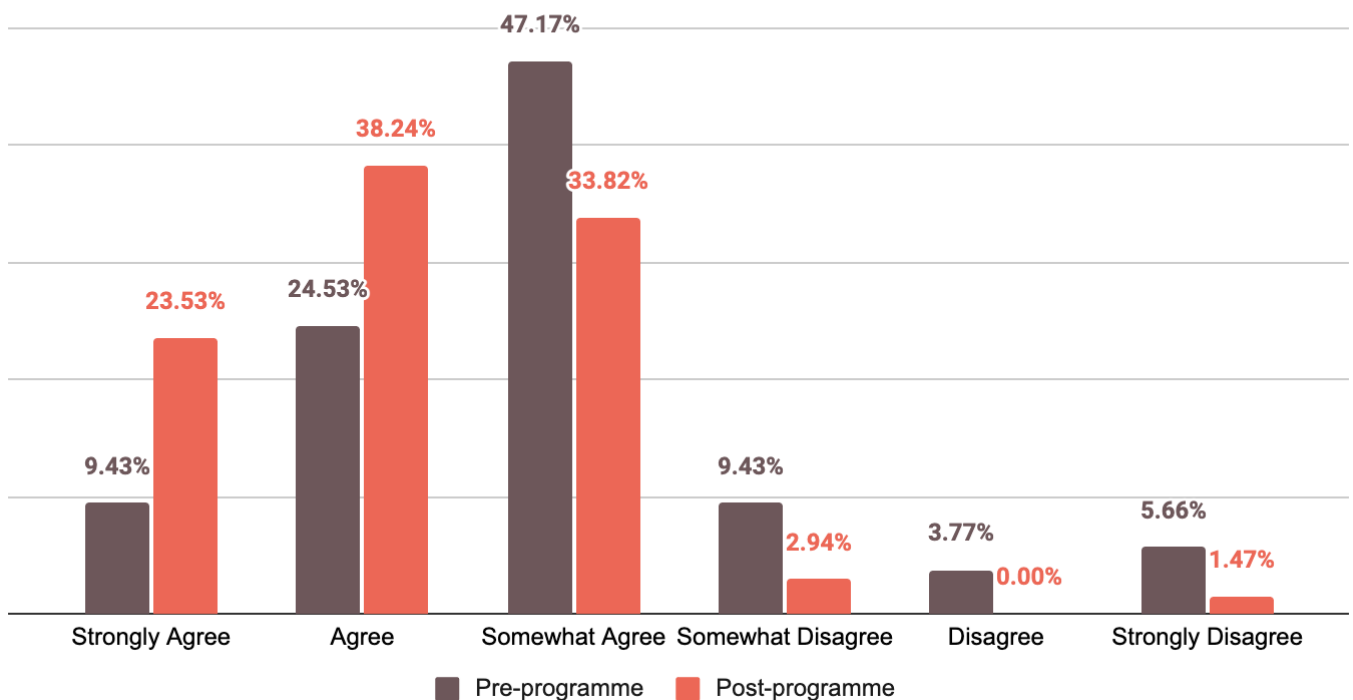
In our pre-programme survey, 38.18% of participants either “Somewhat Disagreed,” “Strongly Disagreed,” or “Disagreed” with the statement “I am able to prevent the spread of disinformation (intentionally sharing false information),” whereas 61.82% either “Somewhat Agreed,” “Strongly Agreed,” or “Agreed.”

In our post-programme survey, the proportion of participants who either “Somewhat Disagreed,” “Strongly Disagreed,” or “Disagreed” with the statement, made up 0.00% of all respondents, while the proportion of students who either “Somewhat Agreed,” “Strongly Agreed,” or “Agreed” made up 100.00% of all respondents.



These statistics illustrate a notable increase in students who feel better equipped to spot disinformation and methods to take to stop it specifically through their enhanced understanding of the intent behind false information propagated online.

Fig.3 "Depending on whom an online post comes from, I consider it more or less credible"



In our pre-programme survey, 18.86% of participants either “Somewhat Disagreed,” “Strongly Disagreed,” or “Disagreed” with the statement “Depending on whom an online post comes from, I consider it more or less credible” while 33.96% either “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed.”

In our post-programme survey, the proportion of participants who either “Somewhat Disagreed,” “Strongly Disagreed,” or “Disagreed” with the statement made up 4.41% of all respondents, while the proportion of students who either “Strongly Agreed,” or “Agreed” made up 61.77% of all respondents.



These statistics are a particularly insightful example of the improvement in students' critical thinking skills, as they now understand the importance of questioning sources and the context of an online post before formulating an opinion.

Insights

Throughout the delivery of the programme, young people were particularly engaged in discussions surrounding the far-right and conspiracy theories. This was explored through students' understanding of minority communities and how they are treated within North Wales and online. At the beginning of the project, some young people had not considered the wider impact that sharing offensive memes on social media would have. Through the delivery of the programme students were able to recognise the negative consequences of sharing offensive online posts.

For the duration of the delivery students continued to recognise social media apps, like TikTok, as a tool in spreading hate. Students specifically recognised this treatment towards celebrities. Using this reasoning we applied it to help students understand how algorithms can encourage certain narratives that allow hate speech to spread.

One area of interest among students was conspiracy theories, and specifically a desire to learn effective methods for debunking such theories within their social circles. A student shared a personal experience with misinformation, recounting how a close friend believed in the flat earth theory and their family subscribed to various conspiracy theories. This student expressed a desire to counter these beliefs but lacked the knowledge and tools to do so. After our programme, the student had an increased sense of confidence in combating misinformation, acquiring the necessary skills and confidence to address it.

Similarly, students also mentioned engaging in discussions about other conspiracy theories with their family and friends. These discussions often revolved around topics related to the royal family, COVID, and the flat earth theory. There was significant interest in conspiracy theories related to the royal family, some of which involved hate speech directed at Meghan and Harry, for example. Participants primarily relied on social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram for information on these topics.



During our sessions, participants started to become more open to different perspectives and actively nurtured their critical thinking skills. By the end of the programme, students felt equipped to challenge the conspiratorial thinking they encountered in their lives.

Conclusion

The above report highlights some key insights into the impact of the Media Literacy & Extremism student programme which we delivered in North Wales in 2023. Following students' participation in the Media Literacy & Extremism programme, participants exhibited a notable improvement in their ability to recognise and target mis, dis, and malinformation - specifically through the encouragement of their critical thinking and emotional resilience toward what they are exposed to online.

Participants particularly engaged with discussions surrounding mis, dis, and malinformation from the far-right. This was explored through their understanding of the treatment toward minority communities within North Wales. At the start of the project some participants had not considered that extreme videos and pictures on social media could have the same impact as committing extreme acts. However, by the end of the project all participants recognised and understood that mis, dis and malinformation can have dangerous impacts in the real world.