



Cultivating Civic Optimism:

Policy Recommendations from the APPG on Political and Media Literacy

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The United Kingdom is experiencing a [trust crisis and widespread polarisation](#), which necessitates a proactive approach to strengthening democratic institutions. The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Political and Media Literacy and its Academic Advisory Group (AAG) have outlined key recommendations for a national public information campaign. This initiative aims to cultivate a citizenry equipped with critical thinking skills and a belief in their power to create positive change, known as "civic optimism."

The policy brief emphasises that this is more than an educational enhancement; it is a fundamental pillar of national resilience. The campaign's success hinges on a sophisticated, multi-faceted strategy.

Key Policy Recommendations:

- **Strategic Design and Messaging:**
 - **Focus on Positive Reinforcement:** Messages should celebrate civic participation and highlight its positive impact to foster ["civic optimism."](#)
 - **Speak with, Not About, Citizens:** Ensure the campaign is [a genuine dialogue](#), especially with young people, by making their voices and perspectives central to the design and delivery.
 - **Use Identity-Based Appeals:** [Frame engagement around a positive personal identity](#), such as "being a voter" or "being an engaged citizen," to align with the human desire for a positive self-image.
 - **Adopt a Multi-Channel Approach:** Use traditional media, digital platforms, and community-level events.
 - **Use Simple and Relatable Analogies:** Draw inspiration from successful campaigns, like [UNESCO's "healthy diet for the mind,"](#) and Shout Out UK's

[‘Dismiss’](#) campaign to make complex concepts more accessible.

- **Funding and Partnership Model:**

- **Comprehensive Government Funding:** The UK government should provide robust financial backing, positioning political and media literacy as a critical national priority.
- **Third-Sector Partnerships:** Collaborate with established third-sector organizations to leverage their expertise and community reach. This model has proven successful in initiatives like the Greater London Authority's [Democratic Participation and Voter Registration Campaign](#).

- **Rewarding Participation:**

- **Foster a Culture of Participation:** Use positive messaging to encourage democratic participation and target voters where they are. For young people, that means social media. Shout Out UK's [#BallotBound campaign](#) ahead of the UK 2024 general election, which reached more than 2 m young voters, is a recent, successful example.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- **Commission a National Assessment:** Conduct a large-scale national assessment of political and media literacy, similar to the [International Civic and Citizenship Education Study](#) . This will establish a baseline against which the campaign's effectiveness can be rigorously measured over time.
- **Embrace Continuous Improvement:** Implement continuous monitoring and evaluation to adapt campaign strategies based on empirical outcomes and evolving societal needs.

By implementing these recommendations, the UK government can empower its citizens, reverse trends of disengagement, and strengthen the nation's democratic health and social cohesion for the 21st century.