

## Digital Literacy and COVID-19: “Navigating the Web in a Pandemic”

*With school closures in effect across the UK, the majority of British students are now learning remotely. This presents a number of challenges both to parents and the education sector: first, the **rapid provision of resources** via on/offline means; second, **continued safeguarding** of young people without direct contact; three, **effective pastoral care** in a time of national crisis. In this context, existing online harms are thrown into sharper relief. Students are likely to have increased access to/engagement with online platforms, in many cases unsupervised, and will face an information landscape rife with confusion, panic and fear. It is therefore essential to adapt Digital Literacy materials via a public health lens, helping to protect and reassure young people, as well as keep them well-informed on the pandemic. ISD will mobilise rapidly to produce the following, in line with sector needs:*

### 1) Digital Literacy Modules

ISD has been delivering Digital Citizenship Education (DCE) across the UK and Europe since 2017. This includes our two flagship programmes – [Be Internet Citizens](#) and [Young Digital Leaders](#) – which help young people to be informed, accountable and positive contributors in the online space. Our resources are tailored for both formal (e.g. school) and non-formal (e.g. youth club) settings, covering key topics such as: mis/disinformation, ‘fake news’, information bias, echo chambers and filter bubbles, , ‘us versus them’ narratives, emotional manipulation, and hate speech. These phenomena are more important than ever, and may well align with students’ lived experience of the pandemic.

ISD will tailor existing resources for the pandemic, exploring how COVID-19 exacerbates or highlights online harms. We will draw examples from the past 3 months, ensuring the activities have maximum relevance and impact on young people. Session guides will be made available online for teachers, with links to useful resources, videos, articles and tools.

### 2) Digital Literacy ‘How-To’ Guide

ISD’s [Young Digital Leaders programme](#) has engaged parents across Europe, helping them understand a range of online harms and support their children as empowered digital users. Many are now struggling to balance working schedules with childcare, and may have limited capacity to monitor how/where young people are engaging online.

ISD will provide a simple toolkit for parents and carers, with tips for how to stay savvy online. This could be accompanied by activity ideas, allowing them to explore online harms with their children in an informal and low-resource setting.

### 3) COVID Newsletter

ISD has a Digital Analysis Unit with cutting-edge tools to monitor, analyse and geo-locate dangerous content online. We are already producing in-depth research on the pandemic, with analysis of trending conspiracy theories and targeted disinformation campaigns. This includes how extremist and/or radical movements are weaponising the crisis, either to sow division or direct hate towards a specific (minority) group. It also explores which platforms are seeing spikes in misinformation or other malign behaviour, e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, 4chan, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok.

ISD will adapt our [COVID briefings](#) for a non-expert audience, making parents, teachers and school leaders aware of key harms as they evolve. This includes viral trends that victimise, harass or blame certain groups for the crisis. Information will be tailored with recommendations and circulated on a regular basis (e.g. every fortnight), ensuring they keep abreast of a rapidly-changing world online.

#### **4) COVID Myth-Busting**

BBC Bitesize have introduced a [quiz](#) to debunk viral myths related to COVID-19. This currently includes 5 basic questions, but as the crisis evolves intentional or accidental 'fake news' is spreading [at an alarming pace](#). We can provide the evidence to expand these materials, using our in-house research and insight from a vast network of academics, analysts and experts.

ISD will provide updates on the hearsay, conspiracies and other harmful content related to the pandemic, which young people may encounter in their online use. The insight will be converted into a variety of outputs with partners, ensuring we reach the widest possible audience (e.g. quizzes and games, 'Myth of the Week' videos on TikTok/YouTube, reporting on Newsround, engagement with social media influencers).