"There is an urgent need for schools to develop digital citizenship in our young people…"

DIGITAL CITIZENS: COUNTERING EXTREMISM ONLINE

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DEMOS

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Executive summary

If the contemporary world is defined by a single trend above all others, it is defined by the burgeoning information revolution that has transformed our societies beyond recognition over the course of the last half century. The development of sophisticated computing, the technological reorientation of vast segments of the global workforce, the invention of the internet and most recently the proliferation of social media technology has radically changed the ways we work, live, develop, communicate and even how we understand each other.

Social media touch on every aspect of our lives. They are transforming our culture, our politics, even our relationships. We live increasingly significant sections of our lives partially or even wholly online. Young people in the UK spend on average more than a day a week on social media.[1] Yet our education system dedicates minimal time to the discussion of the civic and moral questions this new digital commons throws up, or to the provision of the skills young people need to be informed, critical and effective citizens in this new context.

At the same time, our rapidly changing societies are confronted, increasingly aggressively, by new expressions of a much older problem – political extremism and violent radicalism. The role social media play in the recruitment and exploitation of young people by extremist groups, in the propagation of the narratives of violent radical organisation and in the distribution of misinformation should highlight the urgency of addressing this issue.

British schools are responsible for identifying and building resilience against radicalisation as part of their duty of care. Many of the skills required to combat the influence of extremism and the ability of terrorist groups to exploit and manipulate young people are already taught in schools, through existing

personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and citizenship efforts, the British values agenda and the work of individual school leaders and teachers. However, there is a dearth of high quality resources designed to increase the resilience of young people to extremism and radicalisation in a digital context, and those explicitly *digital* citizenship resources that do exist do not substantively address extremism online. At the same time, the school-based development of digital citizenship in our young people, to help them navigate these new online challenges, has become an urgent need.

Education for digital citizenship is not just an effective way to increase the resilience of young people to extremism. It can create more critical citizens, informed consumers and community-minded social media users. The skills developed through digital citizenship education are not just applicable to the fight against extremism on the margins of our society – they present an important way to reduce the political polarisation that runs through the heart of our society.

This report

In this report we present our research on best practice in educational interventions designed to increase resilience to extremism through the development of digital citizenship skills, describe an educational intervention we have designed in partnership with Bold Creative to achieve this, and present our evaluation of a pilot study we have conducted within four secondary schools seeking to measure its impacts.

Chapter 1 explains the new Prevent duty for schools, describes what digital citizenship consists of, and examines what gaps there are in the landscape of resources which deal with the online aspects of extremism and radicalisation, establishing what skills a new digital-citizenship-based Prevent intervention for schools should teach. Chapter 2 presents the context for this intervention, describes the changing social media landscape in which young people find themselves and the changing profile of extremism online, and makes the case for a digital-citizenship-based approach to countering extremism.

Chapter 3 presents our analysis of best practice in school-based countering violent extremism (CVE) and safeguarding interventions in order to inform the design of our intervention, drawing on interviews with 11 key stakeholders in CVE, Prevent delivery, educational interventions and public policy, and a review of nine evaluations and meta-evaluations of comparable interventions. It also presents our rapid review of 12 existing digital citizenship resources. Chapter 4 describes the intervention piloted as part of this project, the design process, the resources developed and their key characteristics, and outlines the theory of change underpinning the intervention as a whole.

Chapter 5 presents the evaluation of the pilot project, describing the impact of the intervention and assessing the delivery process. The report concludes in chapter 6 with a number of observations related to the success of the pilot, the future delivery of this intervention, and the implications of this project for digital citizenship as a vehicle for CVE efforts in schools.

Best practice findings

We carried out a best practice review of school-based CVE and safeguarding interventions and interviewed experts. The results informed the design of our intervention. More broadly, they provide some useful observations on what types of interventions are likely to be most effective in this space, and what considerations those designing such interventions should take into account. These were the key findings of this review:

· For longer-term impacts, interventions should focus on concrete skills development rather than on general, ideological messaging.
· The objectives of the intervention should be clearly stated at the beginning and restated throughout.
· Discussions allowing the expression and exploration of social and religious identities, and the promotion of positive social narratives, are an important part of extremism-related interventions.

- The delivery of interventions by external delivery staff is often a superior alternative to delivery by teachers. Deliverers should be both credible experts and understand the curriculum.
- The intervention should consider a broad range of types of extremism, including Islamist and far right, to prevent particular students feeling alienated.
- Young people respond well to leading the dialogue within the intervention, and a dialogue-based rather than a didactic approach is often more effective. This can be successfully facilitated by role play.
- Content should be eye-opening, realistic and relevant to the situation of the participants, and presented with the appropriate sensitivity.
- The delivery of the session should be tailored to differing perspectives, attitudes and levels of knowledge within different groups.
- The impact an intervention seeks to achieve should be realistic, limited and aligned with the time available in which to deliver the programme.
- The intervention should be directly related to the needs of schools and pupils and ideally tied into the broader curriculum for greatest effect.

The resource development and pilot study

Demos and Bold Creative developed a digital citizenship intervention designed to build the resilience of participants to extremism and radicalisation online. We based it on our research, a survey of existing materials and best practice review. The intervention used an interactive digital presentation deck and printed cards facilitating the examination and discussion of real examples of extremism and hate speech online.

This intervention sought to teach young people how to recognise online propaganda and manipulation, understand how social media change how we communicate, and develop a sense of responsibility over their online social networks. It was designed for delivery in two one-hour sessions, separated by a week, as part of a PSHE or citizenship lesson.

Demos and Bold Creative undertook a pilot study of this intervention, delivering it through two workshops, in one class, in four schools. Demos then evaluated the pilot.

Evaluation findings

Our evaluation of this pilot project allowed us to measure the impact of our digital citizenship intervention, and to conduct a process evaluation to inform its future refinement and delivery.

In summary, in all three areas that were the focus of the intervention – critical thinking skills, digital citizenship and how social media change how we communicate – the pilot project had statistically significant impacts. The intervention was viewed favourably by teachers, and participants felt they were relevant, understood them and enjoyed them.

The key findings of the evaluation, which are based on pre- and post-surveys in participants and comparison groups, focus groups with participants and interviews with classroom teachers, are discussed below.

Impact evaluation

In considering the impact evaluation it is important to note that this experimental pilot evaluation had a comparison group design – described in detail in the section 'Evaluation method' in chapter 5 – within a sample of four schools. The key outcomes reported below are changes in the participant group over the course of taking part in the programme, which are compared with changes in the comparison group. Thus the project approaches level 3 of Nesta's standards of evidence, which makes it possible to attribute some causality to the intervention.[2]

However, participants and comparison group members were not selected randomly. As a result, and because of the small sample, although it is possible to derive statistical significance for large changes, it is more difficult to draw wide conclusions about the effectiveness of the pilot project. This might be possible with an enhanced sample size and randomisation, for example by using a randomised controlled trial (RCT) type model.

These are the key findings of the impact evaluation:

· Over the course of the programme there was a statistically significant (10 per cent) increase in participants' confidence that they could distinguish between truth and lies on social media.
· There was a statistically significant (12 per cent) increase in participants' confidence that they understand what techniques are used to manipulate people on social media.
· There was a statistically significant (10 per cent) increase in participants' confidence that they would know what to do if confronted with hate speech online.
· The intervention had a statistically significant positive effect on participants' understanding of key terms associated with online discourse – particularly 'echo chamber' and 'keyboard warriors'.
· Both the surveys and focus groups showed that participants overwhelmingly felt they had gained knowledge and new skills from the workshops: 89 per cent said that they had learned some or learned lots of new skills and knowledge, and 94 per cent of participants reported that they understood 'some' or 'all' of the content by the end of the workshops.
· The analysis of the civic judgement scenarios in the pre- and post-surveys suggest that the intervention made participants more likely to report extremist material or hate speech online to the police, and less likely to take actions that purely benefit themselves. Participants were also less likely to justify their actions on emotional or selfish grounds, and more likely to justify them through more constructive, solution-orientated reasoning.

Process evaluation

The process evaluation returned positive results, and the qualitative data attested to the efficacy of the programme, while also providing feedback for future improvements. Participants:

· largely felt that the content of the intervention was relevant to them; 77 per cent felt that the workshops were quite or highly relevant to them

- overwhelmingly enjoyed the workshops; 80 per cent liked the workshops or liked them a lot
- almost entirely felt the workshops were age appropriate for them, with 92 per cent suggesting the workshops were pitched at the right age; 3 per cent felt they were more appropriate for older students, and 3 per cent thought they were more appropriate for younger students

1 Introduction

The aim of a life can only be to increase the sum of freedom and responsibility to be found in every man and woman in the world. It cannot, under any circumstances, be to reduce or suppress that freedom, even temporarily.
    Albert Camus, 1960

This chapter introduces the concepts and context that inform the research and approach to the Prevent intervention we designed. It describes the new Prevent duty for statutory bodies including schools, explains what our concept of digital citizenship consists of, and examines what gaps there are in the landscape of resources which deal with the online aspects of extremism and radicalisation. In doing so, this chapter seeks to establish what skills a new digital-citizenship-based Prevent intervention should look like. It further explains why Demos is well placed to produce those resources.

The Prevent duty

In July 2015, under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, all schools became subject to what is known as the Prevent duty. This duty holds that 'a specified authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'.[3] There is now a more rigorous set of proactive requirements for schools to implement to protect students, and challenge the narratives and ideas that give sustenance to extremists and terrorist groups.[4] Many schools already undertook such work, particularly in Prevent priority areas, before the act was passed. Now, all schools are required to do so.

This new duty was designed to reduce the vulnerability of young people to extremism, and ensure that young people are

safeguarded effectively from those who would draw them into terrorism. Its introduction was part the government's wider agenda to challenge terrorism at its root, and challenge extremism in its broader form. The act followed revelations in 2014 about the existence of the so-called Operation Trojan Horse – an organised effort to introduce ultra-conservative Islamist values into several schools in Birmingham.[5] As the act was passed, the threat of young people being drawn in by extremist rhetoric of the Salafi–Jihadist group Islamic State was tragically demonstrated in Bethnal Green, where three schoolgirls – Amira Abase, Shamima Begum and Kadiza Sultana – left home to join the Islamic State, in a case of radicalisation and manipulation in which social media, as well as the school environment, played a critical role.[6]

In order to discharge the Prevent duty effectively, schools and teachers need suitable resources and guidance to inform and support their efforts, to help them work successfully in partnership with local authorities, to train staff to identify at-risk children and bridge sensitive discussions around extremism, and to help pupils stay safe online.

Digital citizenship

In this report we argue that digital citizenship education must play a vital role in the delivery of the Prevent duty. To build resilience to extremism effectively, young people online have to be able to critically evaluate the arguments and media content presented by extremists, to safeguard each other successfully online, and to understand how social media change the dynamics of communication and how we interact with each other online. Effective digital citizenship education, designed with these needs in mind and with a specific reflection on extremism, can be the vehicle for the development of this resilience.

The concept of citizenship itself is complex, and in order to define the terms of any educational intervention based on digital citizenship, some clear definitions are necessary. An exploration of the definition of citizenship further supports the argument that digital citizenship is critical to building resilience

to extremism. It also highlights what is currently missing in the otherwise excellent array of resources currently available to schools.

There are many definitions of citizenship applied in different contexts. A number of sociologists and political scientists refer to citizenship as having three dimensions: citizenship as a legal status, defined by civil, political and social rights; citizenship as political agency, and active participation in political institutions; and citizenship as membership of a political community that is a distinct source of identity.[7] Another definition of citizenship, provided by the Citizenship Foundation and formed in an educational context, is 'the effective, informed engagement of individuals in their communities and in broader society around issues relating to the public domain'.[8]

Digital citizenship, therefore, might be defined as the civil, political and social rights of a citizen in their online activities, their political engagement and activity through digital means, and their membership of an online community that is a distinct source of identity. In an educational context, it might be defined as 'the effective, informed engagement of individuals in their communities, whether local or digital, and in broader society around issues relating to the public domain'.

Digital citizenship education goes beyond teaching online safety, and seeks to inform and engage pupils in order to give them the skills and dispositions they need to be capable digital citizens. It seeks to develop young people who are more active and informed in their citizenry online – more likely to intervene positively in negative situations online, more likely to consume online information critically, more likely to engage positively in online social and political discussions, and to understand the dynamics of social media and how they change our communications. All of these skills are critical to building the individual and collective resilience of young people to extremism and radicalisation.

The government has gone some way to providing the resources and tools necessary for schools to carry out their new Prevent duty, for example through the Department of Education's website Educate Against Hate (http://educateagainsthate.com/),

which draws together existing resources, or the funding of new initiatives such as the project that is the subject of this report. Many effective CVE resources already exist, and indeed many of the skills required to combat the influence of extremism and the ability of terrorist groups to exploit and manipulate young people are already taught in schools, through existing PSHE and citizenship efforts, the British values agenda and the work of individual school leaders and teachers.

However, despite the range of excellent resources available, none have yet drawn together the digital citizenship elements highlighted above (and explored in the next chapter) effectively in the context of CVE education, which are critical to building the resilience of young people to extremism and the delivery of the Prevent duty: critical thinking and media literacy in the context of manipulative argument and extremist propaganda; knowledge of the social effects of social media – how they change our communications with each other and can support extremist opinion; and knowledge of online responsibilities and how to undertake peer safeguarding in the context of extremism successfully.

Demos' contribution

Demos has recognised gaps in the existing market of digital citizenship interventions, highlighted in chapter 3 by reviewing briefly 12 existing digital citizenship resources. While the current range of resources can support wider digital citizenship needs effectually, there are few which address radicalisation or extremism, and none which do so in the context of critical thinking, media literacy and our online rights and responsibilities. There are no resources which can be delivered in classrooms that deal with the threat of extremism in an online context and with a view to the Prevent duty, and there are none which draw together critical thinking, media literacy, online responsibilities and peer safeguarding – skills critical to the development of resilience to extremism and radicalisation online. Thus schools wishing to build resilience to extremism and radicalisation online through a skills-based approach have few resources to draw on.

When developing our intervention Demos has sought to address this problem, and to contribute to the evidence base of what works and what does not in CVE-relevant interventions (whose content is pertinent to violent extremism but does not explicitly discuss it) and in CVE-specific interventions (whose content specifically discusses violent extremism). In recent years there has been a move towards evidence-based policy-making within education policy, characterised by the foundation of the Education Endowment Fund and a new focus on What Works centres. Yet despite the new Prevent duty on schools, levels of evidence of CVE interventions are very poor, with few publicly published studies available even after more than a decade of the Prevent strategy being in place, partly as a result of the sensitivity of the subject matter.

As the threat profile facing the UK evolves, and as civil society organisations come to play a more significant role in the development and delivery of the Prevent strategy, improving the level of evidence available – and therefore the quality of activity – is a priority. Higher levels of publicly available evidence will not just help policy-makers decide what works and what does not, but also ensure that future development efforts do not repeat work previously undertaken elsewhere, and that mistakes are not repeated.

Why Demos?

Demos has a long pedigree of undertaking research related to social media, extremism and radicalisation, and the development of educational interventions.

Through the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media (CASM), Demos has been at the forefront of social media analytic science – not least through the development of the Method52 data mining and natural language processing machine – as well as the application of social science to the digital commons. CASM research on the online aspects of extremism, radicalisation and terrorism, from the reports *The New Face of Digital Populism* on far-right populism in Europe to *State of the Art* on how terrorist groups use social media,

provides the specialist research background for this project.[9]

Concurrently, Demos has conducted extensive research into character education and how best to achieve attitudinal and behavioural change through educational interventions, for example with the reports *Character Nation*, on the evidence behind character education, and *Mind Over Matter*, on growth mindsets.[10] Demos has also developed significant expertise in the design, evaluation and implementation of non-formal educational interventions, including by evaluating two major character-based educational interventions, Character By Doing and On the Front Foot.[11]

This combination of subject-matter expertise and experience in the evaluation of non-formal educational interventions puts Demos in a unique position to develop a digital citizenship education intervention. To strengthen the implementation and delivery of the intervention Demos teamed up with staff at the agency Bold Creative, who through their Digital Disruption project have significant hands-on delivery experience of counter-extremism interventions.

In this project Demos designed, produced and delivered an experimental intervention, then evaluated it through a pilot scheme. This project had a number of distinct objectives, including how to approach a CVE-focused digital citizenship intervention most effectively, to add to the evidence base regarding CVE interventions in schools, and to develop a suite of helpful resources that could be deployed practically in schools.

Having evaluated the intervention and found promising positive results, Demos is keen to build on this work to further develop the suite of resources available, and to continue to deliver these resources in schools. In doing so, Demos will seek to support CVE practically in a way that equips young people with the skills that they need in the 21st century, and empowers them to be effective and considered citizens in the social media space.

2 Changing social media technologies and online behaviour

This chapter presents more detail on the context for this intervention, and justifies why such an intervention is required. It describes the changing social media landscape in which young people find themselves, characterised by the diversification of social media, the growth of small-group, closed social media services and the proliferation of encryption, along with a host of civic challenges from echo chambers to hate speech. It also describes the changing profile of extremism online, including the growing power of extremist voices on mainstream social media, and the new challenges presented to law enforcement agencies and intelligence services by technological change.

In so doing, it argues that a digital-citizenship-based approach to countering extremism is required, to increase the resilience of young people to extremism of all types, and to create more informed, engaged and effective citizens in this increasingly pivotal space.

The changing social media landscape

The diversification of social media, the growth of small-group, closed social media platforms and the proliferation of encryption – particularly among young people and extremists – poses new challenges to law enforcement agencies and intelligence services seeking to limit the activities of extremists online.

Given the crucial role that social media now play within our society across the political, social and cultural spheres – particularly a relatively small handful of very large platforms – it is easy to falsely assume their relative permanence. Yet the social media giants of today, most prominently Facebook and Twitter, are both less than a decade old, and have been in popular use for a shorter time still.[12] The social media landscape changes rapidly,

with new technologies and platforms responding to the changing demands and behaviour of consumers.

Over the last few years, small-group social media platforms have become a mainstream part of the social media activity of many people – particularly the younger generation. Applications like WhatsApp and Snapchat, more attractive than previous small-group social media platforms because of their user-friendly nature, the new capabilities they present and the decreasing cost of data, have over 1 billion and over 200 million monthly active users respectively.[13] Yet these applications are only seven and five years old.[14] The emergence of these and other new platforms – Periscope, Kik, Telegram – fulfil differing functions, and point to the ongoing diversification of social media, as well as sensitive responses to shifting user behaviour, demands and market conditions.

No groups have responded more quickly to this diversification and the emergence of small-group social media platforms than the two that sit at the heart of this project – extremists, violent or otherwise, and young people. It is the most technologically savvy groups – those consumers with the greatest stake in the exploitation of effective technology – that react most rapidly.[15] Behaviour is tied to technological change, and technology changes quickly. What is more, these two groups adapt to this new social media landscape in the same ways. Success stories like Snapchat, Instagram, Tumblr and ASKfm are measured in the numbers of users that adopt the technology. With a few notable exceptions, the relative uptake of each platform among the broader population and among extremists is broadly similar.[16]

A parallel trend to the increasing diversification of social media platforms and use of closed-group social media platforms has been the mainstreaming of encryption. Almost all the major platforms are now encrypted, and the messages sent between users are encrypted.[17] Messages sent on new social media platforms, like Telegram and Snapchat, self-destruct.[18] Files posted to JustPaste.it or conversations held on Whisper or Thoughts Around Me (TAM) are anonymous.[19] This use of encryption has traditionally been where the widest gulf exists

between extremist use and use by the wider population – yet over the last few years, this gulf has begun to narrow in meaningful ways. Yet the key to the size of this gulf is simply usability, and in the past few years there has been a surge in encrypted apps like Telegram, WhatsApp and Snapchat that are designed to be user-friendly.[20] This has resulted in hundreds of millions of users using their services.

When usability is sacrificed in favour of greater security – see surespot or Alrawi (developed by extremists themselves) – the uptake is less widespread and more concentrated among extremist groups.[21] But where encryption is supported by usability, uptake is much more general. More than ever before, social media technology facilitates untraceable conversations between groups that are largely insulated from surveillance, accountability and intervention.

The changing profile of extremism on social media

A number of changes in the practices of extremists online and broader changes in the behaviour of the public on social media have compounded the challenges presented to law enforcement agencies and intelligence services by technological change. Extremists are now more able to use social media to persuade young people and support their transition to radical violence. Social media themselves play a greater role in the formation of our political, cultural and social beliefs, making confronting this capacity more important than ever before.

In the face of this changing social media landscape, traditional, rigidly legalistic, state-based responses to the security challenges posed by this new social media world can only be part of the fight against extremism online. Before new legal frameworks are in place, their relevance is diminished. Before new security powers are developed, or new demands placed on platforms – and sometimes because they are – they are disrupted.

Consider the topic of oversight and safeguarding by social media companies specifically. This approach has become central to discussions of social media over the past few years. Pressure on major social media platforms from governments concerned by

what they host has driven some content into the fringes of the internet, but censorship is technologically challenging and its impact is minimal. A suspended user will re-emerge under a new username.[22] On Twitter, so-called Islamic State accounts use 'swarmcasting' to counter take-down attempts, exploiting a combination of backup accounts, keyword and hashtag-based networks and peer-to-peer signposting. Every extremist video removed from YouTube is backed up in tens of unregulated shadowy corners of the net, just a single click away.[23] And while companies like Twitter, Facebook and Google might be willing to cooperate with government efforts to regulate online content, other companies are not.[24]

The policing of social media content is not just technically difficult, but also sometimes counter-productive. Attempts by the state to regulate the online world can lead to a counter-reaction from users. Edward Snowden's revelations shook the security and terrorist communities alike, and catalysed some much broader changes in social media use. Pew research in the US suggested that of the 87 per cent of Americans who had heard of the Snowdon leaks concerning National Security Agency (NSA) and Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) digital surveillance programmes, 34 per cent had taken at least one step to hide or shield their information from the government, for example by using social media less often or uninstalling certain apps.[25]

Two factors influence extremists' use of social media more than anything else: trust and security.[26] A range of factors can influence levels of trust and security: the technology available, patterns of offline communication, the actions of intelligence and security services, and so on. These factors have led to changes in extremists' online behaviour over time.

Previously, state-based efforts to impair the activities of extremists online have been successful. Before and after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, extremists communicated online with very little restriction or disruption on the part of the security services – as a result, Jihadi forums were often relatively open, few security measures were thought necessary, and communication was comparatively free and easy. A 2006 study, for example, found

4,300 active Jihadist forums worldwide.[27] As the War on Terror progressed, intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies worldwide stepped up their efforts to police the online space, gather intelligence and disrupt extremist activities.[28] The viability of these sites decreased, and inter-extremist trust online – particularly with regard to Islamist extremists – decreased, inhibiting their online activities.[29]

Today, technological changes have led to this approach being less effective. While Jihadi forums are largely inactive or closed down, platforms such as WordPress and Tumblr host hundreds of extremist blogs, Twitter and Facebook are host to numerous extremist accounts, and platforms like WhatsApp, Kik and Snapchat facilitate small-group communication.[30] Among a plethora of factors from technological advances to Jihadist territorial acquisitions, extremists' exploitation of mass-usage social media platforms has become more viable. Over-stretched intelligence and security agencies can monitor, shut down or disrupt only a select number of the most important or dangerous social media accounts – another driving force behind efforts to push social media companies to undertake more substantive safeguarding efforts.[31]

The result is that extremist content is currently both more broadly available than before, and more often found on the same large scale platforms used by the general public. Increasingly, extremists – both far right and Islamist – operate with relative impunity on a range of stable, mass-usage platforms, like Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp.

The threshold for accessing this material has also been greatly reduced. This has led to what might be called 'the exposure effect', where young people today are more likely to stumble on, or more likely escalate their consumption of radical material towards, violent extremist material.[32] Most major platforms now 'auto-play' video content without first asking the user. Viewing a Hizb ut-Tahrir video on YouTube might bring up a 'recommended content' video of a more extreme nature. A search for a certain hashtag on Twitter might return tweets from an Islamic State supporting account a user might not otherwise have come into contact with.

The nature of the material produced by extremists on these platforms has changed too, with slick photo and video content availing extremists of new opportunities to persuade and manipulate young people online. In the past few years there has been an explosion in the volume of photos, videos, podcasts and even live-streaming media online.[33] No group has exploited this more effectively than Islamic State in the past few years, but Demos research has found a similar strategy employed by far-right groups on Facebook and Twitter.[34] The contrast between early al-Qaeda propaganda and the slick, relatable videos released daily by Islamic State sympathisers in Syria, Iraq or elsewhere is striking.[35]

Extremists seeking to persuade and recruit young people online are now often digital natives themselves. The social media savviness that brought Islamic State messages and videos onto Western computers and mobile phones came as a surprise, but was merely a product of a generation who have grown up with these technologies. The new face of terror and extremism online is at its core a simple result of young people who understand the new tools and techniques available to them.

These specific changes in patterns of social media use by extremists are taking place at a time when our outlooks on the world – our social, cultural and political values, beliefs and judgements – are more heavily shaped by online voices than ever before.[36] Increasingly, people debate politics, participate in political activity, consume news and form peer-groups based on shared interest on social media. These trends in turn increase the broader social risks posed by echo chambers – social media networks and spaces where ideas of beliefs are reinforced by expression and repetition in an environment devoid of dissenting opinion.

One of the principal debates in the UK regarding the role of social media in radicalisation has been whether individuals can be radicalised online, or whether online content merely sustains or catalyses radicalisation, or provides practical support for those already persuaded by arguments for violent action.[37] There has been some evidence that in cases where radicalisation has had a significant online component, there is still very often

an offline element.[38] In a changing social media environment, where it is easier than ever before for a vulnerable person to come upon extremist content independently, there are substantive reasons to re-examine the role that social media content plays in radicalisation.[39]

Social media are not just used to persuade and recruit young people into extremist groups – they are used to provide them with the information required to support radical violence. The current conflict in Iraq and Syria has enticed more Western Muslims to become foreign fighters than any previous conflict, and in a shorter period of time. While estimates vary, in many European countries, social media have attracted more citizens than all previous conflicts combined.[40] An important driving force behind this, beyond the relatively low risk of travel compared with travel to previous conflicts in the region, is the ease of access to information facilitating travel.[41] Social media can provide a would-be foreign fighter with information on the best ways to reach Syria, what to bring and what to expect when they get there.[42] At the same time, accounts operated by fighters and supporters in Syria – often drawing on their extended social networks in their home country – can seek to persuade and provide active support for those who might travel to join them.[43] In this manner, social media can further reduce barriers to potential foreign fighters considering travelling to Syria.

For all these reasons, extremism poses a growing threat to our young people. This challenge has not yet been met effectively.

Digital citizenship – a response to online extremism

While law enforcement agencies, security services and social media companies all have roles to play in reducing the impact of violent extremist material online, top down solutions such as platform censorship and the banning of particular users can only provide partial solutions to this problem.

Indeed, such a hard-edged approach to extremist content might not be desirable from a civil liberties perspective. In recent years, efforts to reduce the impact of extremist content online

have focused on the increasingly rigorous application of laws limiting what individuals can and cannot say. These laws themselves have broadened to include additional categories of speech – for example with the previous introduction of hate speech laws in Europe through the EU's 2008 Framework Decision, and now an increasing reference to 'dangerous speech' or even 'undesirable speech'.[44] The extent to which these new rafts of legislation are enforceable is debatable. Increasingly restrictive laws on what a citizen can discuss could stop important conversations about controversial or sensitive subjects – related to faith, politics and identity – being discussed in open digital spaces by individuals potentially vulnerable to radicalisation.

If extremist content is entirely driven from mainstream social media platforms, it might reduce the exposure of vulnerable young people to extremist material. Yet it might also drive extremist content and networks onto more obscure and hidden platforms, away from authorities and individuals who might otherwise be in a position to observe and counter this content, and lend support to at-risk individuals.

Beyond the challenge of extremism, a range of other issues, from hate speech to trolling and the sharing of sexual images online, highlights the need to educate young people to be responsible citizens online. People aged 16–24 in the UK spend an average of 27 hours and 36 minutes a week on social media, and find themselves confronted with an extraordinary array of civic and ethical challenges.[45] Social media have an enormous impact on our culture as a whole. They define who we talk to, and to an extent what we talk about. By channelling us towards certain sources of information, they define what we read, hear or watch. They have eroded the power of the traditional media gatekeepers, with new media sources presenting information without the filters of professional journalism. By enabling the development of social networks based on shared interest and characteristics, social media reduce the extent to which we socialise with people unlike ourselves. Indeed, certain social media phenomena which catalyse radicalisation also contribute to wider polarisation in our political culture.

Most social media users are, at some stage and to varying degrees, part of an echo chamber – an insular conversation within a group agreed on a single conclusion, not representative of wider dialogues or exposed to dissenting views. An individual might conclude from examining their Twitter feed that those in their wider social group are in broad agreement on an issue when that might not be the case. This misperception itself might drive them towards more extreme positions on certain issues.

This phenomenon is further developed by 'the filter bubble',[46] where algorithms online present a personalised selection of content to a user based on their location, past search history and what they have interacted with in the past. For example, on a Facebook feed, if an individual likes or comments on certain types of post – say left-wing political articles – they are likely to see more of this type of article in the future, and fewer right-wing articles, isolating people from perspectives different from their own. Social media algorithms designed to present us with content that we like, based on our previous choices, can reinforce this unhealthy siloing of opinion and social groups. In this way, social media can make us more efficient consumers, and less effective citizens.

That a person using social media every day might not even in broad outline understand these fundamental mechanics is problematic – in fact potentially dangerous. Young people in particular should learn about these basic social media phenomena, and should be taught those wider skills that have become ever more important with the rise of social media – the importance of fact-checking, for example, or the need to develop opinions derived from a wide range of sources. The development of these skills and an awareness of these considerations are required not only to build their resilience to extremism but also to make them effective citizens in the digital age. We often assume that young people's familiarity with this digital world means that they do not require the guidance and development the education system seeks to provide in the rest of our lives. We are wrong.

Navigating these issues requires considered judgement, based on informed guidance, yet the question of what constitutes

good citizenship online is rarely addressed. Often skills related to digital citizenship are covered as part of existing PSHE and citizenship provision in UK schools, though more commonly the emphasis is on safeguarding rather than more active citizenship.

As chapter 1 demonstrated, there are numerous digital citizenship resources available to schools, but not many on the particular skills required for building resilience to extremism. What do you do if you are worried a friend's opinions are becoming more and more extreme? Can you retweet tweets containing hate speech? What do you do if you see racist abuse online? What is an echo chamber? How do social media sites draw together the 'recommended content' they show you?

The answers to these kinds of questions are critically important for young people to understand, for reasons that reach beyond the Prevent agenda. It is often supposed that young people understand technology and older people, such as teachers and senior civil servants, do not. This conflates being digitally engaged, or using technology, with being digitally literate, or understanding how it works, and how it should be used responsibly. In this area of citizenship, as in others, young people need guidance and education.

The objectives of a digital citizenship education should stretch beyond granting young people the knowledge they need to understand how social media work, and seek to develop a sense of online citizenship, an attitude that social media are not just useful tools they use, but a digital space they inhabit, and over which they should feel some responsibility. A consciousness of the duties of the digital citizen, and of the unique power that young people using social media today have, could have a range of positive impacts in countering extremism.

Such an educational undertaking could, for example, increase community engagement online, raising the number of voices challenging extremist content online in a constructive way. It could increase the value and impact of peer-to-peer safeguarding, facilitate the increased reporting of online extremism and hate speech, and lead to higher rates of referral of content, accounts or individuals to law enforcement and security services.

It is clear how digital citizenship could sit alongside other interventions based on values-led themes of positive social identity, counter-narratives and the appreciation of diversity. It could reinforce the broader, basic skills that young people need to be effective citizens in the 21st century. What is more, by pursuing an approach based on the real and not rhetorical empowering of young people, with new skills and understanding, this kind of grassroots effort can flourish in a space where the government is often not regarded as a credible voice, and reduce the securitisation of the web.

In developing such a digital citizenship intervention designed to increase the resilience of young people to extremist propaganda and manipulation, Demos seeks to address this challenge.

3 Best practice review

This chapter presents a rapid review of 12 existing digital citizenship programmes, which highlights a number of important gaps in the digital citizenship landscape, and confirms that there is a lack of holistic digital citizenship resources with a counter-extremism focus on which schools seeking to deliver CVE interventions can draw.

It further presents an analysis of best practice in school-based CVE and safeguarding intervention, conducted in order to inform the design of the intervention. This analysis is based on interviews with 11 key stakeholders and a review of nine higher quality evaluations and meta-evaluations of comparable CVE interventions from the US, the UK and Australia, predominantly with an online element. It also examines the citizenship curriculum in England and Wales, and the June 2015 Department for Education publication 'The Prevent duty',[47] in order to ensure cohesion with both the wider educational needs of schools and Department of Education guidance. The review of these CVE and safeguarding evaluations provided insights into how best to discuss sensitive social issues online in schools, deliver new skills and design an effective and applicable intervention.

The evaluations reviewed were not just those related directly to the online aspects of CVE, but school-delivered interventions with related goals or characteristics. These evaluations included:

· 'Addressing radicalisation in the classroom', an evaluation of the Zak online radicalisation education tool[48]
· *Evaluation of Internet Child Safety Materials Used by ICAC [Internet Crimes Against Children] Task Forces in School and Community Settings* – a meta-analysis of reviews from 31 online intervention schemes

used in the US to tackle the internet aspects of a range of social issues from drug use to gang violence[49]
· *Teaching Approaches that Help to Build Resilience to Extremism Among Young People* – a case study review of ten extremism resilience building interventions[50]
· *'Jenny's Story': An internet safety resource developed to combat child abuse on the internet* – an evaluation of a UK-based, high profile digital safeguarding intervention[51]
· *Evaluation of CEOP ThinkUKnow Internet Safety Programme and Exploration of Young People's Internet Safety Knowledge* – an evaluation of a Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre intervention[52]
· *The ACMA Cybersmart Outreach Program Evaluation* – an evaluation of an internet safety intervention for Australian Communications and Media Authority [53]
· *Common Sense Media's Digital Literacy and Citizenship Curriculum: A Proven Success* – an evaluation of Common Sense Media's Digital Literacy and Citizenship Curriculum[54]
· 'Creating good digital citizens' – an evaluation of the New South Wales Government's digital citizenship programme[55]
· *Educational Evaluation of Cybersmart Detectives* – an evaluation of the Cybersmart detectives intervention, including a review of five additional online safety programmes[56]

While there has in recent years been an increase in the focus on evidence in education policy, CVE-related interventions have traditionally had less open evaluation processes, or been subject to fewer evaluations of the type typical in other educational interventions – particularly in the UK. Consequently there is a relative paucity of high quality evaluative information in this area. This is why it has been necessary in our review to draw lessons from interventions conducted in other countries, and to examine evaluations of programmes not directly related to extremism.

Even broadened out to other types of digital safety evaluations, the level of evidence in this sector remains weak. As one meta-evaluation put it 'Overall, limited evidence has been provided to date supporting the effectiveness of any cyber-safety

program and, in particular, the evidence base of the programs currently available.'[57]

The expert interviews provided a broader range of perspectives into school-delivered interventions. The 11 interviewees consulted as part of this project included national and international security policy experts, social media platform policy experts, local Prevent coordinators, civil servants and academics. A number of these interviewees asked to speak on the condition of anonymity, given the sensitivity of the subject matter and in some cases their roles. No interviewees will be identified in this report.

The best practice review made the following suggestions:

· For longer-term impacts, interventions should focus on concrete skills development rather than on general, ideological messaging.
· The objectives of the intervention should be clearly stated at the beginning and articulated throughout.
· Discussions allowing the expression and exploration of social and religious identities, and the promotion of positive social narratives, are an important part of extremism-related interventions.
· The delivery of interventions by external delivery staff is often a superior alternative to delivery by teachers. Deliverers should both be credible experts and understand the curriculum.
· The intervention should consider a broad range of types of extremism, including Islamist and far right, to prevent particular students feeling alienated.
· Young people respond well to leading the dialogue within the intervention, and a dialogue-based rather than a didactic approach is often more effective. This can be successfully facilitated by role play.
· Content should be eye-opening, realistic and relevant to the situation of the participants, and be presented with the appropriate sensitivity.
· The delivery of the session should be tailored to differing perspectives, attitudes and levels of knowledge within different groups.

· The impact an intervention seeks to achieve should be realistic, limited and aligned with the time available in which to deliver the programme.
· The intervention should be directly related to the needs of schools and pupils, and for greatest effect tied into the broader curriculum.

Existing resources

This section presents our rapid review of 12 high profile existing digital citizenship resources, and highlights the gaps that exist in the current digital citizenship landscape with regards to CVE interventions in schools.

A number of educational organisations, social media platforms and civil society groups have recognised the need to teach digital citizenship skills in schools, and provided a range of resources, from short interventions to multi-year, holistic programmes. There are also a significant number of resources that teach online safety, critical thinking and media literacy, in combination with each other in a range of ways.

This rapid review examined 12 existing digital citizenship interventions:

· the Common Sense Media digital citizenship programme[58]
· Digizen by ChildNet International (www.digizen.org/)
· the Digital Literacy & Citizenship programme from the South West Grid for Learning[59]
· the digital citizenship resources produced by the New South Wales government[60]
· Google and iKeepSafe's Digital Literacy and Citizenship Curriculum[61]
· Google's independent digital citizenship resources[62]
· Netsmartz by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in the USA (www.netsmartz.org/Parents)
· InCtrl resources (www.teachinctrl.org/)
· resources gathered and presented by CyberWise (www.cyberwise.org/)

- resources gathered and presented by Digiteen (https://digiteen.wikispaces.com/)
- the Digital Disruption resources previously developed by Bold Creative (www.digitaldisruption.co.uk/)
- the guidance and resources provided by Parent Zone (http://parentzone.org.uk/)

Many of these resources can provide excellent foundations for a 21st-century citizenship education. Recognising the range of resources available teaching skills relevant to extremism, it is important to reflect precisely on what gap in the market needs to be filled.

A number of these resources provide some skills pertinent to building resilience to extremism online. Some of the highest quality programmes provide a holistic, multi-year package of resources based on a structured framework built up from the most basic digital skills to more sophisticated skills. In some cases, these more holistic programmes do engage in some aspects of critical thinking and media literacy. For example, one of these programmes engages issues of critical media consumption, encouraging young people to consume a wide range of sources. Another addresses media literacy from another angle, exploring the manipulation of digital images. Some programmes combine some critical thinking or media literacy aspects with a discussion of rights and responsibilities online. However, none of these programmes focus on how to tackle extremism and radicalisation online, and none of these resources draw together critical thinking or media literacy skills, knowledge of how social media change how we interact, and rights and responsibilities online.

The same gap exists in the resources designed by the social media platforms themselves which, despite examining online responsibilities and covering media literacy, do not examine extremism or the persuasive forms it takes, directly or indirectly. The US resources considered as part of this review focused overwhelmingly on online safety, far less on citizenship, media literacy and critical thinking, a common trait of older resources; nor do they tackle extremism-related issues.

Some programmes do actively consider extremism, for example through guidance and training relevant to Prevent – but this is not couched in a digital citizenship context. One UK-based programme provides detailed and sophisticated critical thinking and media literacy education in an online context, through a CVE-relevant approach, but without touching on rights and responsibilities online. Another provides valuable training and information on safeguarding, with guidance for schools and teachers on fulfilling the digital safeguarding aspects of the Prevent duty, as well as information for parents on extremism and radicalisation, and critical thinking. However, they do not provide a package of resources for delivery to students which considers extremism or critical thinking in that context.

In summary, currently a range of resources can support digital citizenship education, but few address radicalisation or extremism online, and none do so in the context of critical thinking, media literacy and our online rights and responsibilities. There are not yet resources which can be delivered in classrooms and that deal effectively with the threat of extremism in an online context and with a view to the Prevent duty.

Here we present the findings of our best practice review, which are based on the assessment of evaluations and interviews, through a thematic analysis.

Skills development

A common conclusion of the evaluations and reviews examined in this study was that learning objectives should be clearly signposted and communicated to participants. Participants should be made aware, in any intervention, what the point of the exercise is, and what they will gain from it, as noted in the comments below:

Several key features should be incorporated into any learning game, namely, clearly signposting the key educational themes that are to be covered; the game should allow young people to explore their own identities; the simulation or tool should not patronise or flatter.[63]

The learning or wider objectives of participation should be communicated clearly, along with how the activity in question fits within the broader learning programme, or with other agenda.[64]

Implicit in this observation is that the intervention should be based on the development of specific skills in the pursuit of specific goals. One evaluation highlighted the need for clear links between activities, skills and objectives:

We… urge stakeholders to define program logic clearly, by drawing an explicit connection between the messages given, the skills that are expected to be learned, and how these behaviours will lead to improved safety and well-being.[65]

A regular feature of less effective programmes is a lack of concrete skills development, and a lack of research underpinning the objectives of the programme. A lack of clear learning objectives and of research-based messages were two of the four key failures in online skill and safeguarding-related interventions in the US identified in *Evaluation of Internet Child Safety Materials Used by ICAC [Internet Crimes Against Children] Task Forces in School and Community Settings*.[66] This deduction is supported in *Teaching Approaches that Help to Build Resilience to Extremism Among Young People*, which concluded,

Interventions that include a focus on the 'harder' skills, tools and techniques to improve personal resilience and aim to have real, long-lasting benefits, such as leaving young people better able to cope with life pressures and challenges, use critical thinking skills to appreciate different perspectives and come to their own view, and work well with peers.[67]

Conversely, the mere conveyance of information, safety-related messages or general statements is an insufficient objective of any intervention in schools on the subject of extremism, because a lack of information alone is not the cause of an inability to understand propaganda and manipulation online, or of the vulnerability of young people to extremist approaches online:

The purpose of most of the activities and questions was to reinforce educational messages. The assumption underlying this approach is that youth suffer from a lack of knowledge – so the goals are to ply youth information: 'Bullying hurts'; 'Using a sexual username is going to lead people to think certain things about you'… However, we have made this mistake before – thinking that the reason youth make bad decisions is because they lack knowledge.[68]

The interviewees we spoke to provided some insight into what specific skills they thought should be taught. One local Prevent coordinator suggested that too much value had previously been placed on the teaching of values like tolerance and respect, which – while laudable values to teach young people – did not constitute hard skills. Generally, critical thinking skills and knowledge of how social media change our communications were regarded as important areas for online resilience building. A social media policy expert felt that echo chambers and a lack of consumption of diverse media sources were a key part of online radicalisation and extremism online, and contributed to wider social issues such as political polarisation. Another suggested that teaching young people to be aware of these social media phenomena, and how to adjust their behaviour to compensate for them, could be a useful way of undermining radicalisation online.

Another interviewee, a digital safeguarding expert, suggested that the ability to evaluate arguments and evidence online and apply critical thinking in a digital context was an important skill which could increase young people's resilience to online propaganda. How to identify emotional manipulation – the use of emotive hooks in argument in order to persuade someone or motivate someone to action – was one specific skill that was mentioned.

Identity
Evaluations of previous interventions have found that while the teaching of specific, applicable skills is important, so are

discussions of identity. A number of interviewees suggested that the encouragement of a positive social narrative, and positive expressions of identity, should play an important part of an intervention. Uncertainties around, conflicts within and the pursuit of identities is an important part not just of the attraction of extremist ideologies, but the attraction of other negative groups such as criminal gangs. As one evaluation put it,

Gangs and associations may do more than reinforce local territories and provide group support. They may also help to determine identities and change existing self-perceptions, especially where these associations are separate from – and even at odds with – family and kinship networks… Some of the 'gangs' we heard about had a more or less explicit 'Muslim' focus… Indeed, some young people appear to translate half-understood ideas drawn from so-called radical Islamic or other extremist points of view, into a justification for violence, and anti-social behaviour.[69]

One interviewee suggested that this creation of a positive social narrative could not just be an expression of abstract values, but that it had to create a distinct role for young people. One interviewee proposed that participants should leave the intervention with some sense of responsibility over their social media networks to develop this.

More broadly, evaluations of previous interventions suggested that discussions of identity can play an important part in building resilience to extremist propaganda, which frequently plays on identity conflict and insecurity:

A key aspect of building resilience is supporting young people to explore, understand, and celebrate their personal identity. Particularly effective seems to be enabling young people to reflect on the multiple facets of their identity, discuss the possible tensions and celebrate multiplicity as something which creates balance and 'uniqueness'.[70]

Social media networks can play an important role in the formation, exploration and expression of identity. One social media policy expert suggested that discussions of how people

express and consolidate their identity online, and how this identity can differ from their offline identity, should feature in efforts to build young people's resilience to extremism online.

Delivery

The delivery of successful interventions concerning sensitive subjects – the question of who should teach the relevant skills and facilitate the dialogue – is a complex problem. There are advantages and disadvantages to different models of delivery, and while teachers of course have teaching expertise and good relationships with their students, the complexity of extremism and related issues, as well as the understandable sensitivity of teachers to discuss them, can be a barrier to effective delivery:

It goes without saying that this is a potentially complex and difficult area to tackle either in groups or individually, by teachers who may not have any prior in-depth knowledge or training on this topic.[71]

A number of interviewees highlighted this issue. One digital safeguarding expert suggested that teachers can often be unwilling to challenge opinions because of the difficulties involved in navigating difficult cultural contexts. One interviewee argued,

The willingness, confidence and ability of facilitators to act in such a way that 'connects' with young people is crucial, as hard as this may be for the classroom teacher... Facilitators must have sufficient knowledge to be able to, for example, counter stereotypes or mistaken assumptions about a particular religion, or where this is not feasible, know how to access the necessary information.[72]

At the same time, precisely because of the pre-existing relationships students have with teachers, the facilitation of these kinds of sensitive discussions by teachers could leave participants less willing to speak their minds. Police officers – traditionally a major vehicle for safeguarding interventions – can also be inappropriate facilitators:

Law enforcement may not bring the most successful message or tone… Law [enforcers], because of their experience and professional orientation, tend to emphasize crime and danger, and punishment and sanctions. It is not clear that these themes help to advance many of the skills and behavioural changes that internet safety education is trying to achieve.[73]

More generally, the best delivery staff are also subject experts and in a position to answer students' follow-up questions and related concerns. In some evaluations, a lack of teacher subject knowledge led to a recommendation that the evaluation should be provided by an external provider; the evaluators of CEOP ThinkUKnow Internet Safety Programme believed the subject knowledge of external deliverers to be a key benefit of an intervention,[74] as did those evaluating the ACMA Cybersmart Outreach Program:

Presenter credibility contributed significantly to students' receptiveness to the ISAP [internet safety awareness presentation] information. Students, teachers, and parents/carers recalled the presenters' knowledge and passion as highly influential and persuasive.[75]

Several interviewees suggested that compounding the need for subject-specific credibility was the fact that many schools did not yet have the necessary subject knowledge among staff internally, because the relevant Prevent duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 had only just been introduced. A digital safeguarding expert pointed out that for those schools outside Prevent priority areas, particularly, the delivery of this kind of intervention was often entirely novel. External delivery is of course not the only solution – interventions can involve continued professional development that provides teachers with the necessary skills.[76]

The role of participants

The success or otherwise of interventions is defined not just by the content or the delivery model, but by the nature of the interaction between participants and facilitators.[77] A number of

interviewees, including education experts and local Prevent coordinators, emphasised that interventions should involve dialogue rather than pure information delivery, avoiding a didactic approach. Discussions of subjects like extremism require significant buy-in from participants in order to be constructive, and a dialogue, where student contributions are solicited and valued, can help establish this. Moreover, having students play an active role in discussions can ensure that the skills taught by an intervention can be contextualised through those students' experiences, increasing the understanding that such skills are relevant to them. One intervention commented,

Our findings suggest that critical thinking skills – crucial for interrogating and challenging extremist ideologies – can be most successfully developed through teaching methods that support inquiry and intellectual inquiry led by the young people themselves.[78]

To an extent, this method supports a tailored approach to the intervention, by allowing participants to dictate the pace of the session:

Good pedagogy dictates that learners need to be actively engaged and that learning needs to start from 'where the learner is at'.[79]

These dialogues have to be well structured, and based on strong ground rules that establish the parameters for a conversation, ensure effective time on task, and reduce the risk of unconstructive dialogue or conflict.[80] As one interviewee pointed out, this is particularly important in conversations about extremism because of the sensitivity of the issue:

By sharing [the same rules and conventions] teachers can explore the young person's understanding of what is and is not acceptable in terms of behaviour and how they act, but also of how they should protect themselves.[81]

In some interventions, structure was provided by using particular games, tasks or project-based group activities. In a number of interventions role play has also been used to this end.

One review of what makes interventions effective observed,

Those case studies which had an explicit focus on building personal resilience used simple theoretical frameworks and interactive techniques such as role-play to explore complex ideas about the control we can exercise over our perceptions, emotions, behaviours, interaction with others and capacity to affect change in our lives.[82]

Another evaluation similarly suggested that role play or other structured creative activities could perform this positive role:

Youth also need a chance to discuss and practice the new protective skills they are taught. The most established way for youth to practice is through role-plays, although other creative activities can be designed that let youth imagine when and how the skills could be applied and some of the different outcomes.[83]

Focus of content and flexibility

The expert interviewees we spoke to were clear that in order to achieve the best effect, interventions had to be sensitive to how participants might react to controversial content. One interviewee suggested that it was important to focus on content more closely related to particular types of extremism relevant to the area in which an intervention was delivered – for example, focusing on Islamist extremism in areas where those groups were most active, and on the far right in areas where they were a particular problem. This could be achieved by reasoning with students that this reflected which communities were the victims of different types of extremist exploitation. However, most interviewees suggested that a balanced focus on a range of types of extremism was a better approach, in order to prevent the alienation of people from certain religious, ethnic or social groups.

One interviewee suggested that non-threatening specific interventions should be used including a diverse range of examples, purely because the skills required to build

resilience to extremism are not largely threat specific, and future threats might present a very different profile. This argument dovetails into the wider discussion over whether to pursue a CVE-specific approach, which deals specifically with extremism, or a CVE-relevant approach, which conveys the right skills without a significant focus on the issue of extremism.

The specific needs of particular participant groups, often from diverse cultural, religious or socio-economic backgrounds, necessitates flexibility in delivery. As one interviewee put it, teachers are often keen to adapt these resources themselves, and programme designers should be realistic about the considerations, requirements and capacities of teachers. However, this flexibility has to be tempered with the need for the goals of an intervention to be achieved in full. One evaluation of internet child safety materials noted,

Many of the program developers we talked with prided themselves on the flexibility of their lesson plans – they openly encouraged schools and presenters to pick and choose among the lessons, to adapt them, and to implement as much or as little as they have time for. And our survey of law enforcement presenters suggested that this was in fact happening. However, this adaptability comes at a big cost if the effect is that the goals of improved youth safety are compromised.[84]

Relevance of materials

One of the most important considerations in designing an effective intervention is achieving the best balance between approaching the subject matter with sensitivity, and ensuring that the materials are relatable and hard-hitting enough to engage participants and maintain their attention. Materials need to be relevant to participants' experiences:

Interventions work best where they are young person centred and young person led. This means both having young people as peer educators, which offers a sense of empowerment and can raise self-esteem, and making materials and activities relevant to young people's lives, for example, by reflecting local community language and issues.[85]

One evaluation suggested that the closer that scenarios or educational games could be to the lived experiences of participants, the more likely the skills taught in the intervention would be applied:

Real-time interactions are more likely to closely mimic daily interactions and this, in turn, can have important implications for the extent to which messages become part of a student's response repertoire.[86]

Indeed, the key criticism of one programme was that the scenarios presented during the workshops that formed its core were not realistic enough:

As young people are highly likely to interact with and sometimes meet 'virtual friends', this issue should be addressed with reference to 'real examples' of anonymised vignettes where possible and videos should be more realistic.[87]

In the subject area of extremism, the use of more realistic scenarios is associated with a greater degree of 'grittiness', and potentially uncomfortable language and subject matter. One interviewee emphasised that getting this balance wrong could significantly devalue a session. As one evaluation concluded,

A well-designed intervention often feels enjoyable to those participating and [distinct] from normal classroom lessons. This can be achieved by building in lots of opportunities for discussion and group exercises, the use of an external facilitator rather than a classroom teacher, and taking an approach that emphasises 'honest realism' – not shying away from controversial details.[88]

One social media policy expert suggested that the social content of an effective intervention needed to reflect accurately not only the experiences of participants, but also the actual content that young people produce on social media today – not just text, but videos, annotated content, pictures, memes and other types of rich media content.

Length of intervention

Interventions should have limited and realistic objectives. A number of interviewees pointed out that there is no single perfect length or format for an intervention, not least because of the paucity of evidence in this regard. However, as a general rule, the more time spent studying a subject the better understood it will be. The evaluation of the I-SAFE programme

reported a positive relationship between the number of hours the program was implemented and the amount of knowledge gained; the more time that was spent on the program the greater the extent of knowledge gained in relation to general internet safety, predatory identification, managing risk and sharing personal information. However, they did not provide an indication of the level at which program implementation was deemed to be optimal.[89]

Whether it is a single workshop or a year-long programme, the impact an intervention seeks to achieve should be aligned with the time available in which to deliver it. Indeed, one of the four key failures in online skill and safeguarding related interventions in the US identified in *Evaluation of Internet Child Safety Materials Used by ICAC Task Forces in School and Community Settings* was a lack of sufficient time for learning:

Complex problems like peer harassment, risky sexual decisions, and unhealthy romantic relationships (online or offline) require more time than one 45-minute lesson can offer to learn new ways of thinking about these problems and building skills that can improve healthy decision-making.[90]

More than one evaluation recommended the dedication of more time to teach the materials than was included in the studied intervention. The evaluation of Cybersmart Detectives by the Child Health Promotion Research Centre trialled as a 90–120 minute session suggested that in future

consideration should be given to fitting the activity into a maximum of two periods, including time allowed for briefing and a plenary (say a

maximum of 80–90 minutes online). Alternatively, restructuring for a series of three 50min periods with one for briefing and one for the plenary may be more acceptable.[91]

One interviewee suggested that the need to recognise these limitations makes a further argument for skills-based interventions rather than broad and holistic values-based efforts: 'If someone has a deeply negative view, will that realistically be changed in a workshop or two?' Interventions that attempt to provide a single solution to a problem as complex as resilience to extremism are unlikely to succeed.

Curricular linkage

Some of the interventions that were evaluated as successful not only delivered safeguarding outcomes around a specific issue, but also fulfilled a range of other school requirements, encouraging schools to engage in the programme. For example, one intervention was evaluated particularly positively:

[It] meets the learning outcomes for PSHE or citizenship, as well as other education criteria for key skills, such as: communication, information and communication technology, working with others, improving own learning and performance, and problem solving… also aptly meets the safeguarding agenda and meets e-safety requirements set by Ofsted.[92]

Moreover, a number of educational experts interviewed suggested that in order to have a coherent long-term effect, an intervention should be tied into the wider curriculum. Bonnell et al observed:

If an intervention or programme is to be sustainable, it needs to be linked with and anchored in the wider curriculum. An intervention that is integrated into curriculum structures and teachers' working practices increases its potential to have maximum impact for students. It also avoids the necessity of spending time on one-off, isolated discrete interventions that may need to be repeated at further cost in the future.[93]

Beyond the requirements for schools to pursue counter-radicalisation safeguarding and to support the Prevent programme, as necessitated by the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, there is a range of other requirements that extremism-related interventions can fulfil in a UK context. They include the promotion of fundamental British values and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils; extremism-related interventions can easily be threaded into PSHE delivery.

Additionally, extremism-related interventions can be introduced as part of the citizenship curriculum. The government's guidance on the citizenship curriculum, *Citizenship programmes of study: key stages 3 and 4*, touches on a number of key themes of relevance.[94] According to the government's guidance on citizenship, the purpose of citizenship is to provide pupils with knowledge, skills and understanding to prepare them to play a full and active part in society. As part of this, citizenship should 'equip pupils with the skills and knowledge to explore political and social issues critically, to weigh evidence, debate and make reasoned arguments'. The last two of the four general aims of the citizenship curriculum are of particular relevance to building resilience to extremism, and empowering students to take action against it. Pupils should:

- develop an interest in, and commitment to, participation in volunteering as well as other forms of responsible activity, that they will take with them into adulthood
- [be] equipped with the skills to think critically and debate political questions

Much of the key stage 4 citizenship curriculum focuses on critical thinking, how to make a positive contribution to society, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens:

Teaching [at key stage 4] should build on the key stage 3 programme of study to deepen pupils' understanding of democracy, government and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Pupils should develop their skills to be able to use a range of research strategies, weigh up evidence, make persuasive

arguments and substantiate their conclusions. They should experience and evaluate different ways that citizens can act together to solve problems and contribute to society.[95]

These key themes, along with the need for community cohesion, are reflected in two of the nine areas the key stage 4 citizenship curriculum recommends that pupils should be taught about:

· *diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding*
· *the different ways in which a citizen can contribute to the improvement of his or her community, to include the opportunity to participate actively in community volunteering, as well as other forms of responsible activity.*[96]

Those delivering or designing extremism-related programmes should make schools and teachers aware of these links in order to promote those interventions more effectively and to prevent unnecessary repetition within school delivery.

4   The intervention

This chapter briefly describes the intervention piloted as part of this project. It summarises the design process, describes the resources developed for the intervention, explains the key characteristics of the resources, and outlines the theory of change underpinning the intervention as a whole.

The design process

This intervention, and the resources that sit at the heart of it, were developed in partnership with the digital design consultancy Bold Creative. Through its Digital Disruption initiative, Bold Creative has been involved in creating and delivering counter-extremism workshops for young people for a number of years, producing resources – often in partnership with Demos – for delivery in schools across the country. The initial design was informed by our assessment of the changing social media landscape and behaviour of extremists and terrorist groups, including so-called Islamic State (see chapter 2); by the best practice review presented in chapter 3; and by previous research by Demos on social media behaviour and extremism online.

During the design phase, focus groups with teachers from a range of schools and of a mix of seniorities and year 10 pupils from diverse backgrounds allowed us to discuss the desired characteristics and approach of the intervention, and to present draft resources in order to solicit critical feedback. Expert interviews with educational intervention experts, Prevent local delivery officers, academics specialising in counter-extremism, social media platform policy officers and civil servants also informed the design process throughout.

The theory of change

Figure 1 outlines the theory of change around which this intervention was based.

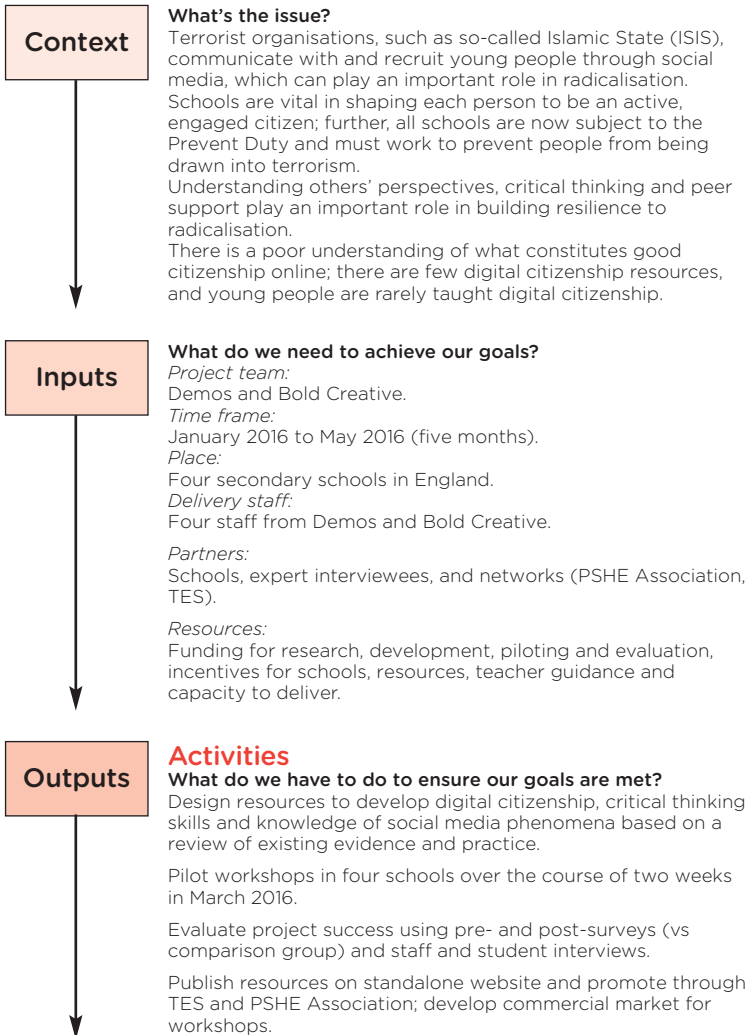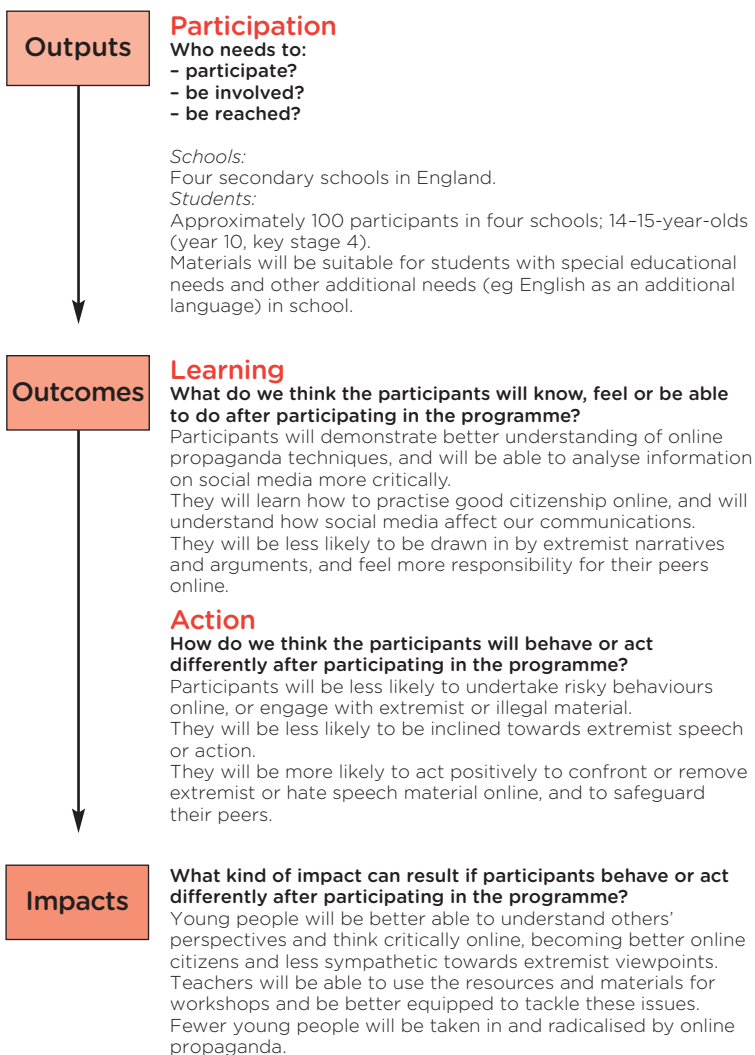Figure 1   **Digital citizenship pilot intervention**

Context

What's the issue?
Terrorist organisations, such as so-called Islamic State (ISIS), communicate with and recruit young people through social media, which can play an important role in radicalisation. Schools are vital in shaping each person to be an active, engaged citizen; further, all schools are now subject to the Prevent Duty and must work to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.
Understanding others' perspectives, critical thinking and peer support play an important role in building resilience to radicalisation.
There is a poor understanding of what constitutes good citizenship online; there are few digital citizenship resources, and young people are rarely taught digital citizenship.

Inputs

What do we need to achieve our goals?
Project team:
Demos and Bold Creative.
Time frame:
January 2016 to May 2016 (five months).
Place:
Four secondary schools in England.
Delivery staff:
Four staff from Demos and Bold Creative.

Partners:
Schools, expert interviewees, and networks (PSHE Association, TES).

Resources:
Funding for research, development, piloting and evaluation, incentives for schools, resources, teacher guidance and capacity to deliver.

Outputs

Activities
What do we have to do to ensure our goals are met?
Design resources to develop digital citizenship, critical thinking skills and knowledge of social media phenomena based on a review of existing evidence and practice.

Pilot workshops in four schools over the course of two weeks in March 2016.

Evaluate project success using pre- and post-surveys (vs comparison group) and staff and student interviews.

Publish resources on standalone website and promote through TES and PSHE Association; develop commercial market for workshops.

Figure 1   **Digital citizenship pilot intervention – *continued***

Outputs

Participation
Who needs to:
– participate?
– be involved?
– be reached?

Schools:
Four secondary schools in England.
Students:
Approximately 100 participants in four schools; 14–15-year-olds
(year 10, key stage 4).
Materials will be suitable for students with special educational
needs and other additional needs (eg English as an additional
language) in school.

Outcomes

Learning
What do we think the participants will know, feel or be able
to do after participating in the programme?
Participants will demonstrate better understanding of online
propaganda techniques, and will be able to analyse information
on social media more critically.
They will learn how to practise good citizenship online, and will
understand how social media affect our communications.
They will be less likely to be drawn in by extremist narratives
and arguments, and feel more responsibility for their peers
online.

Action
How do we think the participants will behave or act
differently after participating in the programme?
Participants will be less likely to undertake risky behaviours
online, or engage with extremist or illegal material.
They will be less likely to be inclined towards extremist speech
or action.
They will be more likely to act positively to confront or remove
extremist or hate speech material online, and to safeguard
their peers.

Impacts

What kind of impact can result if participants behave or act
differently after participating in the programme?
Young people will be better able to understand others'
perspectives and think critically online, becoming better online
citizens and less sympathetic towards extremist viewpoints.
Teachers will be able to use the resources and materials for
workshops and be better equipped to tackle these issues.
Fewer young people will be taken in and radicalised by online
propaganda.

Figure 2 **An illustration of echo chambers, a key concept in the intervention**

The resources

The resources created by Demos and Bold Creative were based on an interactive digital presentation deck, which presented anonymised, real-life instances of extremist propaganda and dialogue on a range of social media platforms. These conversations included video and rich media content, and were designed around an options menu allowing facilitators to choose the subject focus of the intervention – from far-right extremism to homophobia, from anti-Semitism to Islamist extremism. The facilitator dictates the pace at which these scenarios unfold, providing opportunities for participants to contribute comments and responses, and for facilitators to explore particular aspects of the conversations, and to use those conversations to explore key terms and concepts, for example 'echo chambers' (figure 2).

This presentation deck also explains key terms and concepts that can be referred to at any point during the conversations through a series of sidebar menus. These sit alongside the scenarios, and include interactive elements – such as a 'hate-o-meter' scale explaining hate speech and free speech (figure 3) – and professionally produced illustrations describing key concepts, such as us & them narratives and echo chambers.

Figure 3   **The hate-o-meter, part of the digital resource**
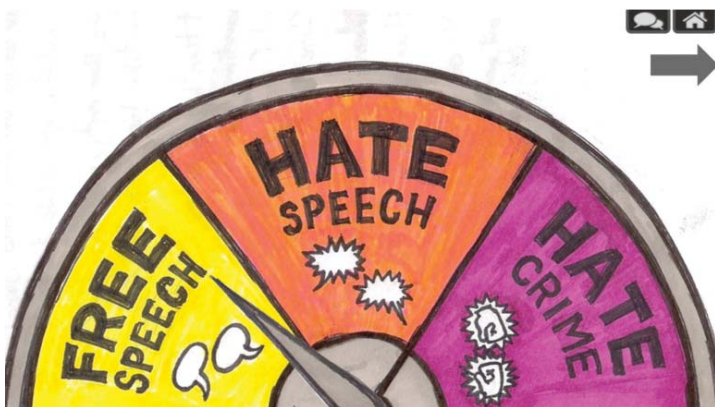
This presentation deck forms the core resources around which the intervention is based. This deck is supplemented with a range of other materials, including professionally produced A3 print out cards illustrating an extremist conversation online (figure 4), and blank cards allowing participants to involve themselves in the conversation and apply the skills they have learned. We also produced workshop plans, teacher guidance and a glossary of key terms in order to help teachers deliver the resources in the absence of external delivery assistance.

The delivery model

These resources were delivered through two one-hour long workshops, during PSHE, RE or citizenship lesson time. They were delivered on the same day each week for a two week period.

The first workshop focused predominantly on critical thinking and the recognition of online propaganda, based around the explanation of and discussions centred on 'the three methods of manipulation' online: us & them narratives, scapegoating and emotional manipulation. The second

Figure 4   **One of the interactive conversation threads used to demonstrate online extremism, in this case grooming undertaken by an ISIS recruiter**
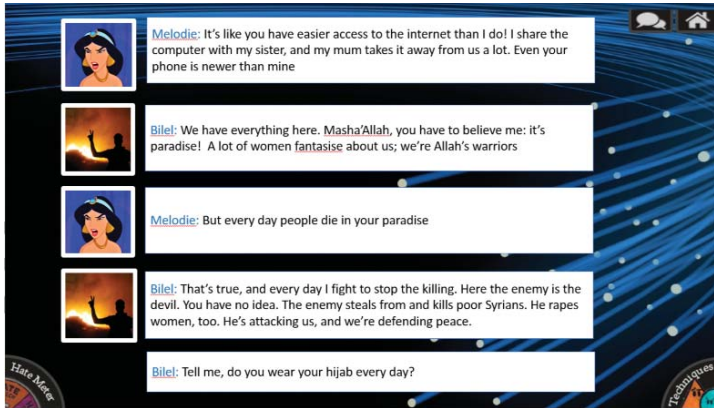
workshop focused predominantly on digital citizenship and peer-to-peer safeguarding; it centred on an explanation of and exercises related to 'the three principles of digital savviness': emotional intelligence, digital farming and comm-unity.

Both workshops involved the delivery of certain elements of knowledge related to specific social media phenomena and how social media change how we communicate online. These elements were focused on the concepts of the 'echo chamber' and the 'keyboard warrior'.

While teachers were also present to manage behaviour, two facilitators delivered each workshop – one Bold Creative workshop delivery specialist, who facilitated the session, and one Demos researcher, who provided expert knowledge and answered participants' questions on specific details. However, the workshops were designed potentially to be delivered internally by teachers and teaching assistants.

Each session examined key concepts, terms and the scenarios themselves, and was delivered in a relaxed way, with participants leading the dialogue and contributing to the

scenarios with comments and observations. There was a focus on group work, both as a whole class and in small groups. Each session began with an explanation of the objectives of the sessions and the skills that would be gained, and ended with a review of key terms and skills.

The key characteristics of the resources

Following our preliminary research, best practice review and expert consultation, the intervention was designed with a range of specific characteristics and features in mind.

It was intended to convey a positive social narrative to the participants – that they were in a position of power on social media, and that they had to take a lead in identifying and arguing against extremism and hate speech online, and in gaining peer-to-peer support. This was in order to incubate positive changes in how participants actually behave online.

The intervention also focused on developing specific skills such as enabling participants to recognise propaganda and poor arguments, and to develop critical thinking and specific knowledge of the different ways in which social media change the way in which we communicate online.

The resources were based on a number of anonymised real-life examples of social media conversations on a range of platforms, which involved various types of hate speech and extremism, in order to make the material more engaging for participants.

The intervention was designed in a modular manner in order to increase flexibility in delivery. The resources provided a range of social media situations on a number of topics – from homophobia to anti-Semitism, from far-right extremism to Islamic State – all of which contained contributions pertinent to the skills development objectives of the intervention. This means that delivery staff and teachers can choose the particular situations to focus on, depending on the needs of the participants and other considerations, and can choose to pursue either a CVE-relevant or a CVE-specific approach, according to their preference.

The resources were created to facilitate participant-led dialogue rather than the presentation of information. This invests participants in the intervention, and allows them to relate it to their own situation and to dictate the focus of delivery.

The needs of schools were at the forefront of the conception of the intervention, which was designed to tie into the delivery of the PSHE and citizenship curriculums, as well as British values delivery, and social moral spiritual and cultural development.

This intervention was intended first and foremost to be delivered by external deliverers – Demos researchers and Bold Creative school workshop specialists. However, teacher guidance documents were also produced to allow teachers to deliver the resources in future.

5 Evaluation

This chapter presents the impact and process evaluation of the experimental pilot in which we delivered the intervention.

The impact evaluation included qualitative and quantitative elements, consisting of pre- and post-surveys of the participant classes in each of the four schools involved, and of a comparison group in each school. These surveys examined confidence and knowledge in areas directly related to the objectives of the intervention, and assessed the experience of the workshops in the participant group post-surveys. These surveys also presented a series of four online civic judgement scenarios related to hate speech and extremism, each of which described a situation, and asked respondents to choose from a range of options how they would respond to it and why.

This impact evaluation was accompanied by a process evaluation, which included: process-related questions in the participant post-survey; four focus groups with participants in the workshops, one from each class, each consisting of five or six pupils, examining the experience of the participants in the workshops; and four interviews with classroom teachers observing the delivery of the workshops, examining the pedagogical aspects of the delivery, and the utility of the workshops from the perspective of teachers.

Here we describe the key findings of the evaluation.

Key findings: impact evaluation

There were positive impacts across a range of key measures:

- There was a statistically significant (12 per cent) increase in participants' confidence that they understand what techniques are used to manipulate people on social media, compared with

no statistically significant increase (3 per cent) in the comparison group.

· Over the course of the programme, there was a statistically significant (10 per cent) increase in participants' confidence that they could distinguish between truth and lies on social media, compared with no statistically significant increase (5 per cent) in the comparison group.

· There was a statistically significant (10 per cent) increase in participants' confidence that they would know what to do if confronted with hate speech online, compared with a statistically insignificant decrease (−4 per cent) in the comparison group.

· Statistically, the intervention significantly increased participants' understanding of key terms associated with online discourse – particularly 'echo chamber' and 'keyboard warrior'.

· There was an increase of 10 per cent in the level of participant confidence that they could confront extremist opinions online, though this increase was not statistically significant.

· The intervention did not make participants more or less comfortable socialising with people from different backgrounds from them. However, this question was the one area in which a statistically significant change (of 3 per cent) was observable in the comparison group.

· Both the surveys and focus groups showed that participants overwhelmingly felt they had gained knowledge and new skills from the workshops: 89 per cent responded that they had learned or learned lots of new skills and knowledge, and 94 per cent of participants reported that they understood some or all of the content by the end of the workshops.

· The analysis of the civic judgement scenarios in the pre- and post-surveys suggests that the intervention made participants more likely to report extremist material or hate speech online to the police, and less likely to take actions that purely benefit themselves. Participants were also less likely to justify their actions on emotional or selfish grounds, and more likely to justify their actions through more constructive, solution-orientated reasoning.

Key findings: process evaluation

The process evaluation returned positive results across all measures, and the qualitative data attested to the efficacy of the programme, while also providing feedback for future improvements:

- Participants largely thought that the content of the intervention was relevant to them, with 77 per cent of them finding the workshops quite or highly relevant.
- Participants also overwhelmingly enjoyed the workshops: 80 per cent of them liked the workshops or liked them a lot.
- Participants almost entirely found the workshops were age appropriate for them, with 92 per cent suggesting the workshops were pitched at the right age; 3 per cent felt they were more appropriate for older students, 3 per cent thought they were more appropriate for younger students.

Key findings: evaluation method

The quantitative evaluation was based primarily on pre- and post-surveys of the participants in the four classes who undertook the workshops, and surveying an equal number of comparison classes. Participants in each of the comparison classes came from the same school and year as each of the four participant classes by the school, selected into groups by school staff. The pre-surveys were delivered a week before the first workshop, and the post-surveys a week after the final workshop, though following the rescheduling of a class in one school the post-survey was delivered a week late. In total, 165 students were surveyed – 75 pupils in the participant groups and 90 in the comparison groups. Further details on our evaluation method can be found in the technical appendix to this report.

In reflecting on the quantitative results, it is important to note that this experimental pilot evaluation operated on a comparison group design with a sample of four schools. Given the lack of randomisation and the small sample size, although it is possible to derive statistical significance for large changes, it is more difficult to draw wider conclusions about the effectiveness of the intervention as may be possible with an enhanced sample

size and randomisation (eg an RCT-type model). The evaluation therefore approaches level 3 on Nesta's standards of evidence, whereby it is possible to attribute some causality to the intervention, albeit the evidence could be strengthened by introducing randomisation and increasing the number of participants.[97]

This quantitative research was supplemented with qualitative research, which focused mainly on the experience and process of the intervention, but also examined the extent to which the young people involved and their teachers felt that they had gained new and relevant skills. There were two elements of qualitative research. Interviews were conducted after the final workshop had been delivered with the class teachers in charge of each of the participant classes in the four schools. These 30 minute interviews covered the delivery of the workshops, the pedagogical observations of the teachers and the teachers' review of the suitability and value of the material. Demos researchers also conducted four focus groups of between 30 and 45 minutes, one in each of the participant classes, after the final workshop. These focus groups centred on the experience of the participating students, how relevant they felt the material was to their lives, and their review of the resources and approach taken in their delivery.

This review of the qualitative and quantitative research is presented below in two parts: the impact evaluation and the process evaluation.

Impact evaluation

The intervention sought to achieve positive impacts in three specific areas of digital citizenship:

· the development of critical thinking skills
· the development of critical social media consumption skills
· the development of peer safeguarding skills and online responsibility

These goals defined the structure of the intervention as well as the evaluation of its impact, which was based on participants'

levels of agreement with nine statements, supplemented by participant focus groups and class teacher interviews following the intervention.

Across five of the nine impact-measuring statements and in all three of these impact areas, a number of statistically significant impacts were achieved. Qualitative research supported these impact assessments.

Critical thinking

The intervention sought to develop the critical thinking abilities of participants, in particular to recognise and critically evaluate manipulation and poor argument used online. It attempted to enable participants to understand how extremists manipulate people on social media, and to distinguish between poor arguments and high quality arguments in that context. This is best expressed as the ability to distinguish between truth and lies on social media.

Developing critical thinking skills was the focus of the first workshop, though they were reviewed in the second workshop. The impact of this element of the programme was analysed by assessing in pre- and post-surveys participants' levels of agreement with the following statements:

I am confident I know how to differentiate between truth and lies on social media.

I understand what techniques are used to manipulate people on social media.

Figure 5 shows the two confidence statements related specifically to critical thinking, and reveals there was a statistically significant positive change between the pre- and post-survey results of the participant group on two key measures. There was a 10 per cent increase in the level of agreement with the statement 'I am confident that I can distinguish between truth and lies on social media', with the average response on a seven-point Likert scale (from strongly agree at 7 to strongly

disagree at 1) changing from 5.2 to 5.8 out of 7. In the comparison group, there was a positive variation, though this small positive change was not significant.

There was a larger statistically significant positive change between the pre- and post-survey results of the participant group with regards to the level of agreement with the statement, 'I understand what techniques are used to manipulate people on social media.' The average level of agreement with this statement rose from 5.0 to 5.7 out of 7. In the comparison group, there was again a non-significant positive variation.

The positive effects observed in the surveys were mirrored in focus groups. When asked whether they might apply what they had learned about critical thinking, propaganda and manipulation in their everyday use of social media, participants commonly suggested either that they might well, that they would, or that they already had done so since the end of the workshops:

I can like, when I go online, I can sort of analyse how people are commenting, and what manipulation they are using, how they can persuade you.

I know what they're doing.

I can [read an extreme argument] and think back to how we read it in school.

I look at people writing that kind of stuff online, and now I know what they are doing.

Social media interaction
The intervention sought to develop in participants a knowledge of how social media change how people interact online, and what technological and social factors online influence the way people communicate and consume information, in order to allow them to contextualise and better understand extremism and hate speech online. This was achieved by discussing a number of

Figure 5 **The extent to which participants' level of agreement with two statements on critical thinking changed after the intervention (participants n = 75, comparison group n = 90)**
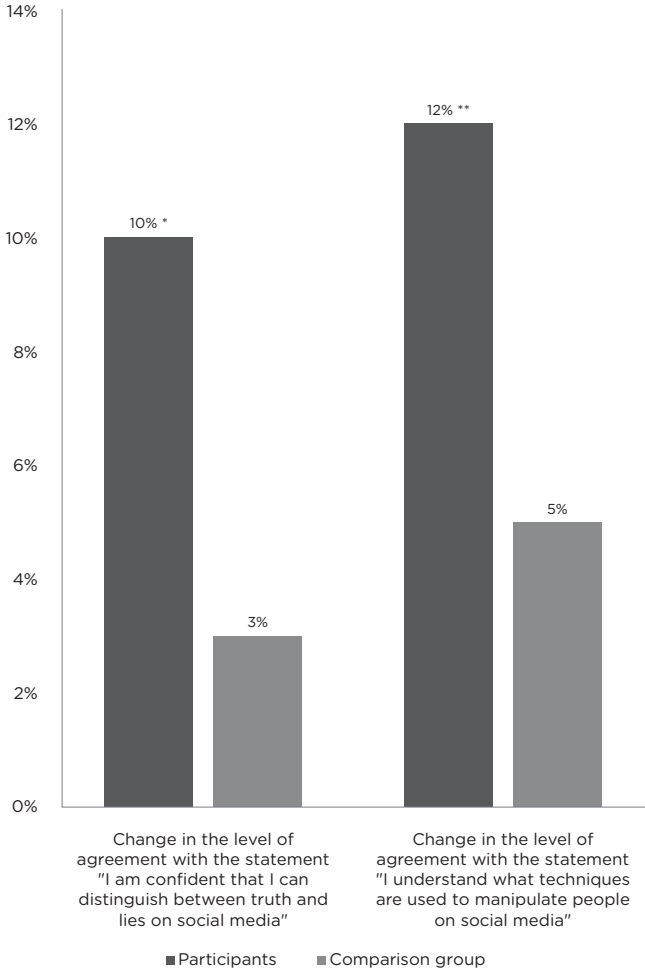
* = significant at p <0.05 level
** = significant at p <0.01 level

online concepts, including anonymity and the selective consumption of media content (see chapter 1). The two principal social media phenomena discussed were:

· the online disinhibition effect, simplified to the term 'keyboard warrior', where the nature of digital communications (reduced empathetic communication, reduced social cues, in some cases anonymity, and so on) change how people interact
· 'echo chamber', where small groups lacking dissenting opinion gravitate towards a more extreme position through mutual reinforcement

This understanding was developed in both workshops. The impact of this element of the programme was analysed by assessing in pre- and post-surveys participants' levels of agreement with the following statements:

I understand what an echo chamber is.

I understand what a keyboard warrior is.

I actively seek out and understand viewpoints that differ from my own.

Figure 6 shows the extent to which participants understood what the two key terms meant before and after the workshops. In both cases, there were significant positive changes in the level of knowledge confidence of participants, which was as expected, because 'keyboard warriors' and 'echo chambers' were concepts participants were unlikely to have come into contact with previously. Participants were likely to have their own colloquial knowledge of what keyboard warriors might refer to.

There was a significant positive change in the level of agreement with the statement 'I understand what an echo chamber is' between the pre- and post-survey responses of the participant group, with the average response to this statement on a seven-point Likert scale (from strongly agree at 7 to strongly disagree at 1) rising from 1.8 to 5.3. In the comparison group, there was again a non-significant positive variation.

Figure 6 **The extent to which participants understood what an 'echo chamber' and a 'keyboard warrior' are after both workshops (participant group n = 75, comparison group n = 90)**
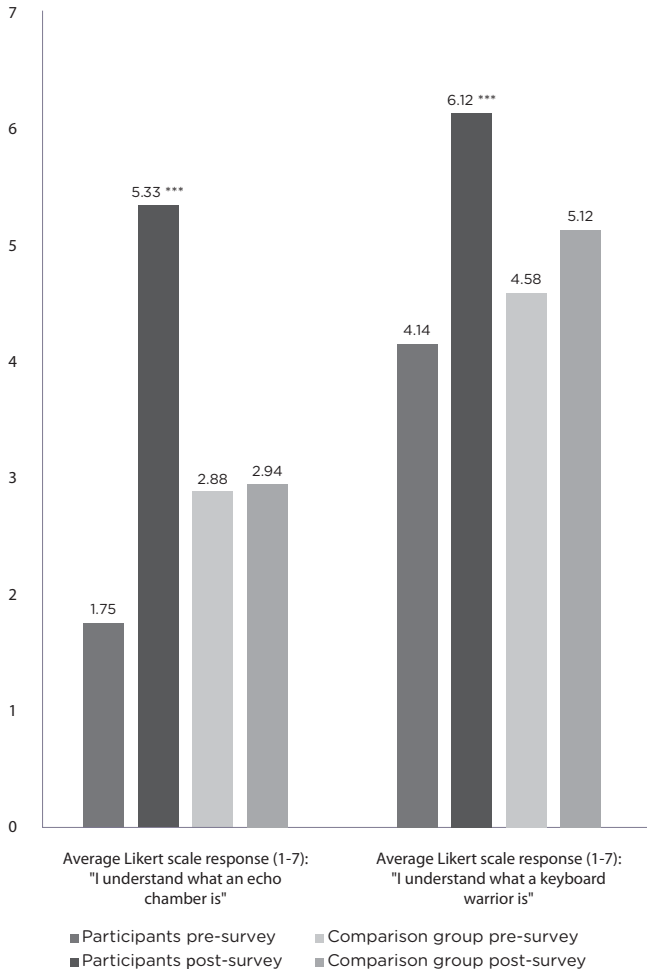
*** = significant at p <0.001 level

Similarly, there was a significant positive change in the level of agreement with the statement 'I understand what being a keyboard warrior is', with knowledge of this term rising from a higher baseline of 4.1 to 6.1 between the pre- and post-survey. Again, in the comparison group, there was a non-significant positive variation.

There was no significant change to the level of agreement with the third and more general statement, 'I actively seek out and understand viewpoints that differ from my own': a 3 per cent positive change in the participant group, too small to be significant, and a −1 per cent negative change in the comparison group.

Responsibilities and peer safeguarding

The intervention also sought to increase participants' sense of responsibility over their peers online, and their confidence in responding to or otherwise dealing with hate speech and extremism online. This was achieved by discussing the importance of digital citizenship, and considering a series of participatory scenarios, examining the options participants have when confronted with similar situations and what considerations they might take into account.

Enhancing these abilities was the focus of the second workshop, and touched on in the first workshop. The impact of this element of the programme was analysed during focus groups with participants and interviews with class teachers, and by assessing in pre-and post-surveys participants' levels of agreement with the following statements:

I would know what to do if I'm confronted with hate speech online.

I am confident that I could challenge extremist opinions online.

When I post, share, or distribute messages online, I think about how they might affect other people.

I understand what behaving well online consists of.

Figure 7 shows the two confidence statements related specifically to hate speech and extremism, and shows positive change between the pre- and post-survey results of the participant group on two key measures, though only one of these changes is found to be statistically significant. There was a 10 per cent increase in the level of agreement with the statement 'I am confident that I could challenge extremist opinions online', but this change was not significant. The average response to this statement on a seven-point Likert scale (from strongly agree at 7 to strongly disagree at 1) changed from 4.4 to 4.9 out of 7. In the comparison group, there was a non-significant positive variation.

There was a larger, statistically significant positive change between the pre- and post-survey results of the participant group with regards to the level of agreement with the statement, 'I would know what to do if I'm confronted with hate speech online.' The average level of agreement with this statement rose from 5.1 to 5.6 out of 7, a statistically significant positive change. In the comparison group, there was a non-significant negative variation.

The focus groups reinforced the idea that the workshops had helped the participants develop the ability to understand and react effectively to hate speech and extremism online. Generally, participants were positive about the skills they had learned in this area during the workshops, and related them back to their actual social media use, commenting:

I now understand how to react and what to do in those kind of online situations.

[We'll be more careful about] what you read and what you write. So when you write you'll think not to use us and them for example, and when you read things you'll know when it's hate speech.

Yeah, seeing the replies on the cards [in the second workshop], I think I'd definitely think about it before doing it.

Figure 7 **Changes in participants' level of agreement with two statements on digital citizenship after the second workshop (participant n = 75, comparison n = 90)**
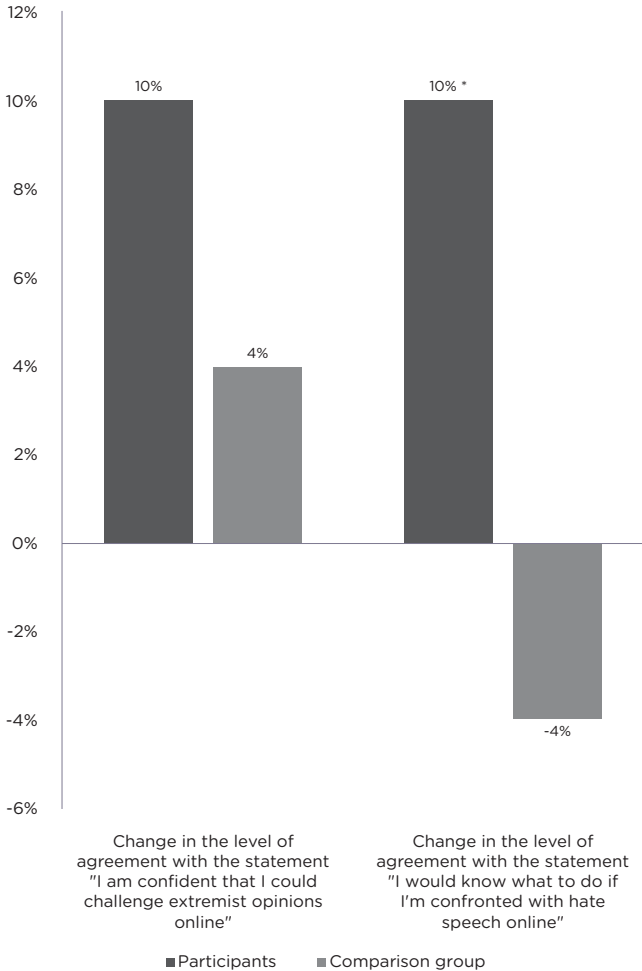
* = significant at p <0.05 level

There was however no significant change in the level of agreement with the statement, 'I understand what behaving well online consists of.' In both groups, the average level of agreement was very high in the pre-survey – 6.25 and 6.23 out of 7 in the participant and comparison groups respectively, leaving little room for positive change – and this score was largely unchanged as a result of the intervention, with a 0 per cent change in the participant group, and a 1 per cent positive change in the comparison group.

There was also no significant change in the level of agreement with the statement, 'When I post, share or distribute messages online, I think about how they might affect other people.' There was a –3 per cent negative change in the participant group, a change too small to be significant, and a 6 per cent positive change in the comparison group, from a baseline of 5.45 dropping to 5.30 for the participant group, and of 5.36 rising to 5.66 for the comparison group (see figure 8).

Knowledge gain and key terms recall

Beyond the key impact measures explained above, the post-survey undertaken by the participants, and the focus groups with participants and interviews with classroom teachers, provided insights into the extent to which teachers and participants felt that new skills and knowledge had been conveyed and understood by the students through participating in the workshops.

Participants overwhelmingly agreed they had learned new skills and gained knowledge from the workshops, and that they had understood some or all of the subject matter conveyed. A very high proportion said they understood some or all of the content of the workshops by the end of the programme.

When asked 'Do you feel like you learned new skills or gained knowledge from the workshops?', 89 per cent of respondents replied either 'yes' or 'yes, lots', while only 9 per cent responded 'no' or 'no not at all' (figure 9).

Figure 8 **Changes in participants' level of agreement with statement 'When I post, share, or distribute messages online, I think about how they might affect other people' after the second workshop (participant n = 75, comparison n = 90)**
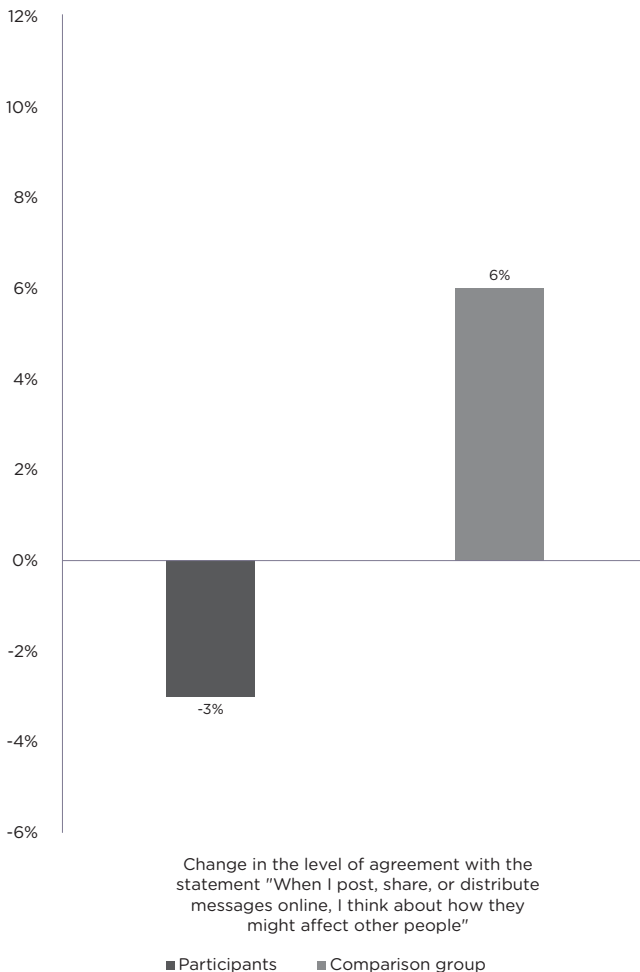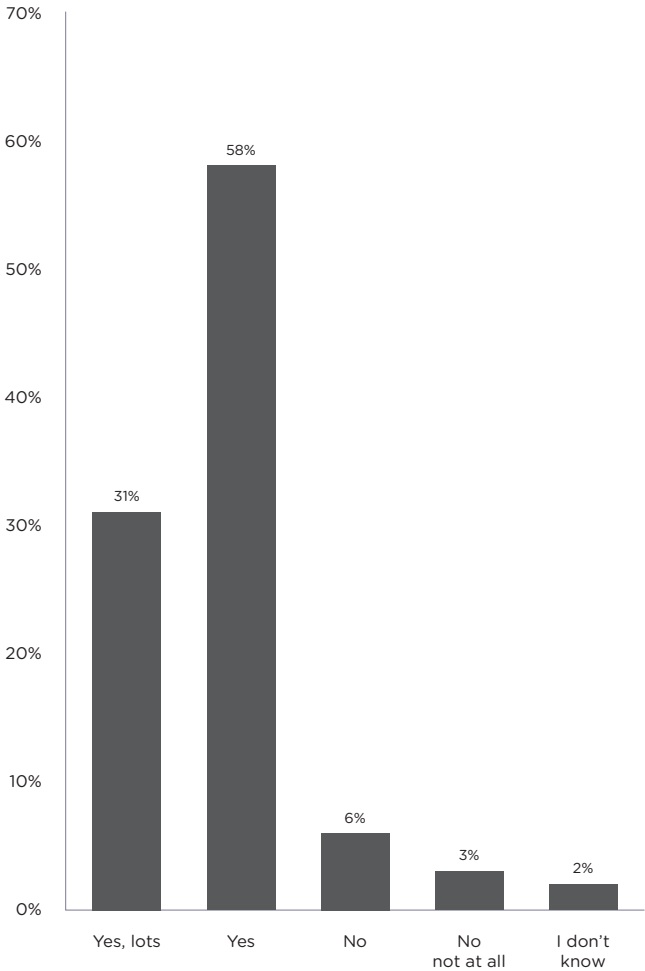

Change in the level of agreement with the statement "When I post, share, or distribute messages online, I think about how they might affect other people"

■ Participants ■ Comparison group

Figure 9   The extent to which participants agreed with the question 'Do you feel like you learned new skills or gained knowledge from the workshops?' (n = 65)

As well as feeling that they had gained new skills or knowledge, participants also thought they had understood the subject matter by the end of the workshops. Nearly all the participants (94 per cent) said they understood some or all of the subject matter by the end of the workshop, with only 3 per cent saying they understood little, and no respondents answering that they understood nothing (figure 10).

Generally, teachers were also positive about the skills that the participants took away from the workshops. One teacher observed that the students had started using the key terms used in the workshops in other classes, and that they were feeding the themes from the workshops into other courses:

Overall I think it's been a positive thing for students. We can feed this back into their course work, and the work we do about radicalisation. In fact they've been using those key words in some of their lessons now. It's helped me too, because I'd never come across [for example] echo chambers... I'm using those terms myself in other lessons as well.

The participant survey asked respondents to recall terms they had used in the workshops. These were the three key terms associated with the first workshop – The Methods of Manipulation: scapegoating, us & them narratives and emotional manipulation – and the three key terms associated with the second workshop – The Principles of Digital Savviness: digital farming, emotional intelligence and comm-unity.

The ability of participants to recall these terms is not of particular importance: the terms were invented and used to signpost observations and discussions, and without a comparative pre-survey measure, change cannot be observed. However, the extent to which participants can recall terms associated with these two workshops provides a measure of the relative impact of the subject matter of those workshops.

The levels of recall for the first workshop's key terms were higher than those for the second (figure 11). This reflects the fact that the second workshop sought to convey more information that the first, while also revising the material covered in the second session. Consideration might be given to revising the digital citizenship terms in future workshops.

Figure 10 **The extent to which participants agreed with the question 'Do you feel like you understood the subject matter by the end of the workshops?' (n = 65)**
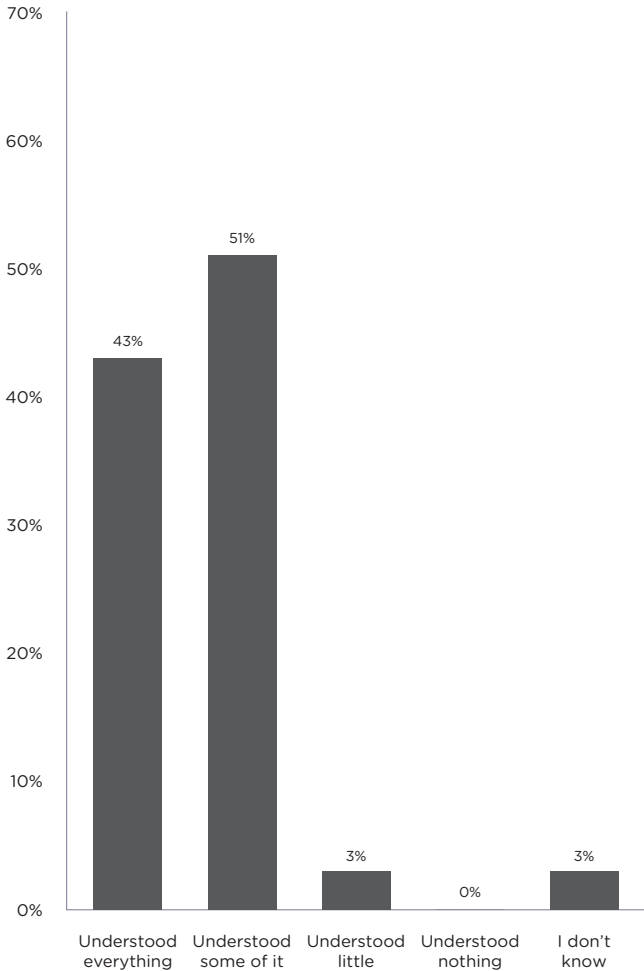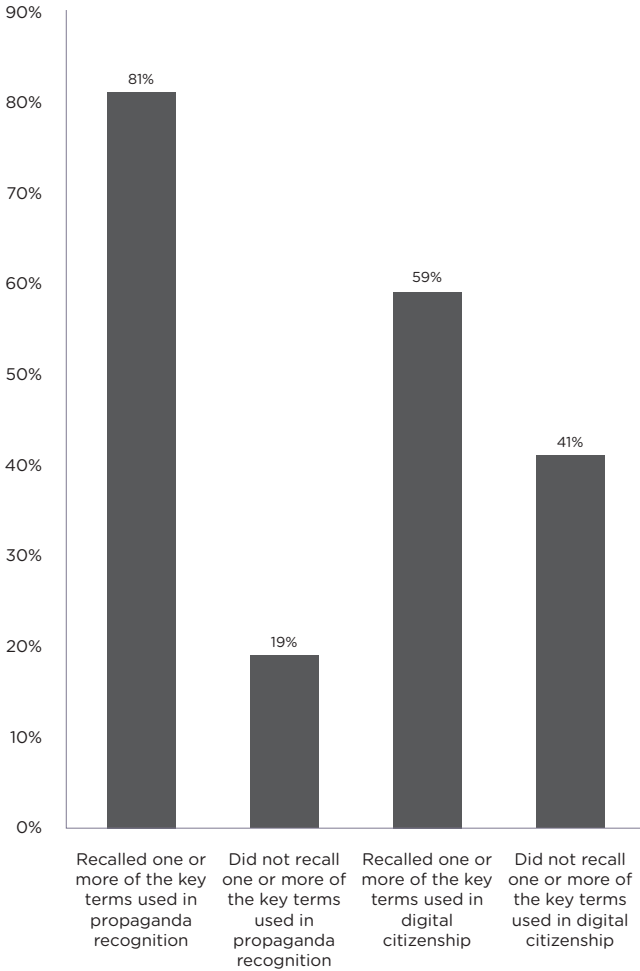
Figure 11   **The extent to which participants recalled key terms after the workshops (n = 67)**

Civic judgement scenarios

The analysis of the civic judgement scenario aspects of the pre- and post-surveys provided insight into how the intervention might have changed participants' attitudes and choices. Their responses to these scenarios suggested that after participating in the project participants would be more likely to report extremist material or hate speech online to the police, and less likely to take actions that purely benefit themselves. More profoundly, participants were less likely to justify their actions on emotional or selfish grounds, and more likely to justify them by giving constructive, solution-orientated reasons.

The pre- and post-surveys presented participants and comparison group members with a series of four online civic judgement scenarios. For each one, respondents were asked to choose from a list of 11 potential actions, including options like 'I would block or unfriend them', 'I would try to discuss why they felt that way with them', 'I would report it to the police' or 'I wouldn't do anything'. They were then asked to choose a justification for this decision, again from a list of 11 potential options, including 'I would want the authorities to get involved', 'I would want to discourage them from doing it again' and 'I wouldn't want to tell them what to think'. The scenarios themselves reflected a range of possible online encounters related to free speech, hate speech and extremism (figure 12).

These scenarios present a varied range of situations for which differing actions might be appropriate. Demos researchers grouped the responses to these scenarios together, in order to identify patterns within a larger sample of responses and examine net changes in responses between pre- and post-surveys.

In the analysis of the actions and justifications, researchers examined changes in the responses in two ways. First we examined changes to the individual action and justification option choices made by comparison and participant groups between the pre- and post-survey. Second we grouped action and justification responses thematically into four categories by types of responses chosen.

Figure 12 **Civic judgement scenarios used in pre-and post-surveys**

Scenario 1

You are messaging in a group with some friends, when someone expresses a racist opinion about one of your classmates.

Scenario 2

You write a social media post arguing for a cause you believe in. Someone comments on it, aggressively disagreeing with your opinion.

Scenario 3

Someone from another year group in your school posts a couple of social media statuses arguing for violence against an ethnic or religious group.

Scenario 4

Someone you don't really know shares a video on social media encouraging violent rioting in the UK, and tags you in it.

These were the categories for the action responses:

· *individual action:* actions that involve direct interaction between the respondent and the subject, either to persuade or dismiss them, including 'I would try to discuss why they felt that way with them' and 'I would block or unfriend them'
· *negative action:* actions broadly categorisable as a poor choice in any of the four scenarios, including 'I would insult them' and 'I would share what they said more widely to shame them'
· *recourse to authority:* actions that draw in the involvement of third parties, including 'I would report it to the social media platform I was using' or 'I would report it to the police'
· *inaction:* actions that involve a lack of action, including 'I wouldn't do anything' and 'I would ignore it/them'

These were the categories for the justification responses:

- *passive:* justifications for a lack of action or not getting involved, including 'I wouldn't want to tell them what to think' and 'It wouldn't really bother me'
- *uninformed:* justification choices that indicate uncertainty or confusion, including 'I don't know why' and 'I don't know what I'd do'
- *active:* justification choices that indicate a desire for action, without involving a third party, including 'It would make me upset or angry' and 'I would want to discourage them from doing it again'
- *escalation:* justification choices that indicate a desire for action involving a third party, including 'I would want to get advice on what to do' and 'I would want the authorities to get involved'

The most significant of the changes in individual choices, demonstrating thematic trends through the lens of the categories described above, are discussed below.

There were two significant individual choice changes in the participant group between the pre- and post-surveys. No similar changes were observed in the comparison group for either of them.

Before the intervention, choosing the option 'I would block or unfriend them' was common, a choice made by 21 per cent of respondents (see figure 13). After the intervention, the option 'I would block or unfriend them' was chosen only 13 per cent of the time, a 38 per cent decline. The number of participants choosing the option 'I would report it to the social media platform I was using' increased from 7 per cent to 13 per cent of all action responses, an 86 per cent increase.

This change reflects a willingness among participants to take actions with a greater consideration of other social media users and their wellbeing – blocking a user makes them invisible to that individual user, and reporting someone to a social media company can lead to more significant action against that user. Key objectives of the workshops were to encourage participants to report hate speech and extreme propaganda to social media

Figure 13 **How participants' choices of two options in civic judgement scenarios changed following the intervention (participant group n = 96 pre-survey, 73 post-survey; comparison group n = 105 pre-survey, 88 post-survey)**

Legend:
- Participants pre-survey
- Participants post-survey
- Comparison group pre-survey
- Comparison group post-survey

Data:

	'I would block or unfriend them'	'I would report it to the social media platform I was using'
Participants pre-survey	21%	7%
Participants post-survey	13%	13%
Comparison group pre-survey	14%	8%
Comparison group post-survey	15%	6%
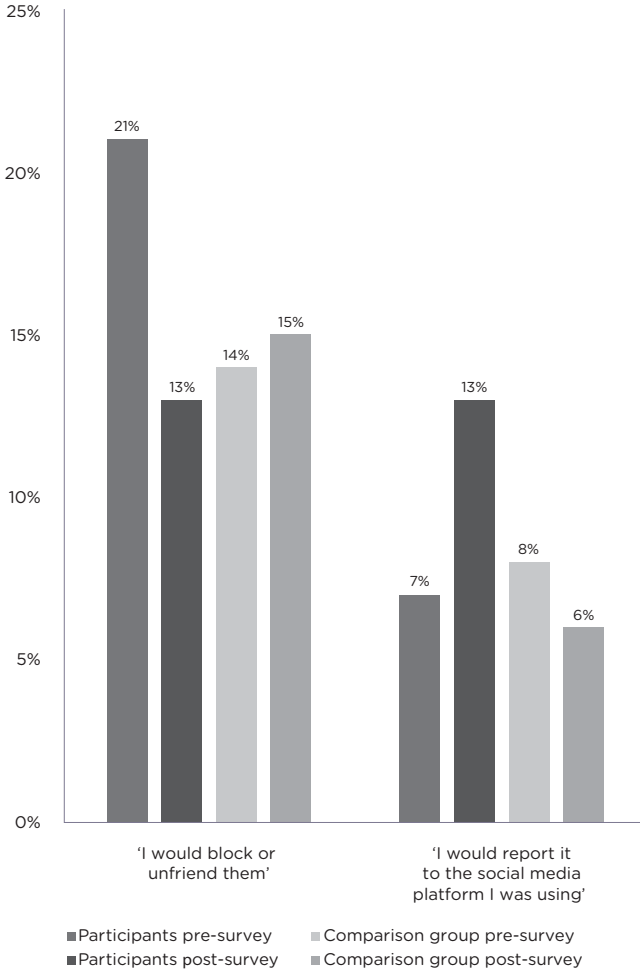
networks, or in more extreme cases to the police, and promote a greater sense of collective responsibility for their social networks.

These specific changes to the types of action participants were prepared to take were reflected in the general trend of their responses within the thematic categories of action covered in the civic judgement scenarios. Individual actions reduced from 51 per cent to 44 per cent of responses, and actions where a participant would seek help from authority increased from 16 per cent to 25 per cent of all responses. As a result of the intervention participants were more willing to report people involved in extremism or hate speech to social media platforms – policing their social media networks – or to contact the police, though this change was less substantial (figure 14).

These changes of participants to action choices reflected the influence of the workshops in a number of degrees. The most radical changes, however, were in the justifications young people made for their action choices

There was a notable decline in the number of respondents citing less considered or less rational justifications for action. For example, the proportion choosing actions that were based on emotion – 'It would make me upset or angry' – declined from 14 per cent to 10 per cent, while the use of more selfish or casual justifications also declined, with the proportion choosing 'It wouldn't really bother me' declining from 12 per cent to 9 per cent, and the proportion choosing 'I wouldn't want to speak to them' declining from 17 per cent to 13 per cent.

Conversely, there was an increase in the number of more constructive, solution-orientated justifications for action (figure 15). The proportion of actions justified through the statement 'I would want to persuade them to think differently' increased from 12 per cent to 16 per cent, while the proportion of responses justified through a desire to escalate the problem to the relevant authorities, 'I would want the authorities involved', doubled from 5 per cent to 10 per cent of all responses.

This general trend – a reduction in the number of passive or ill-informed justifications, and an increased willingness to bring hate speech or extremism online to the attention of social media companies or the police – was reflected in the thematic

Figure 14 **Changes in types of action participants took in response to civic judgement scenarios pre- and post-survey (participant group n = 96 pre-survey, 73 post-survey, comparison group n = 105 pre-survey, 88 post-survey)**
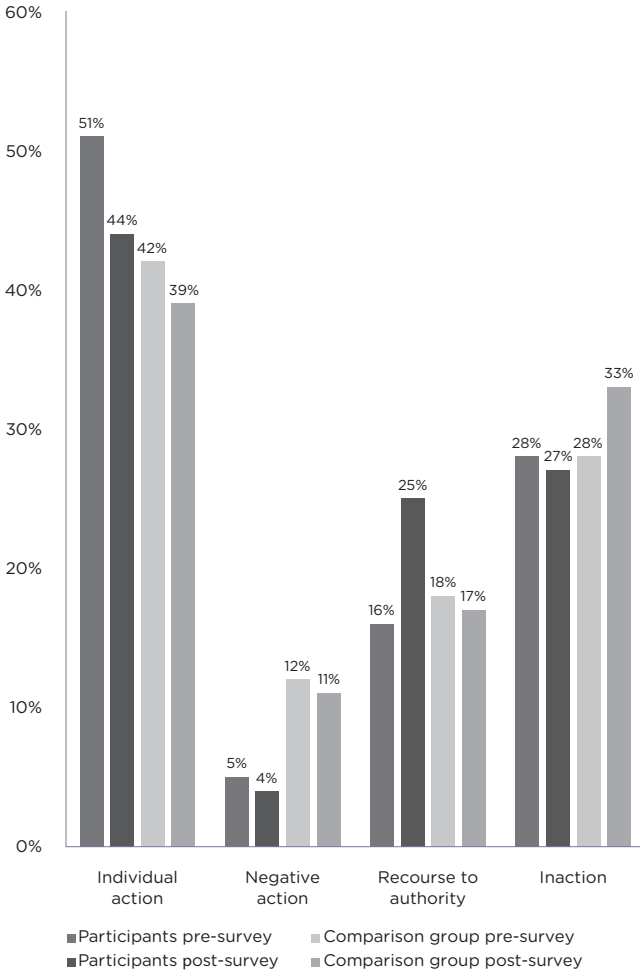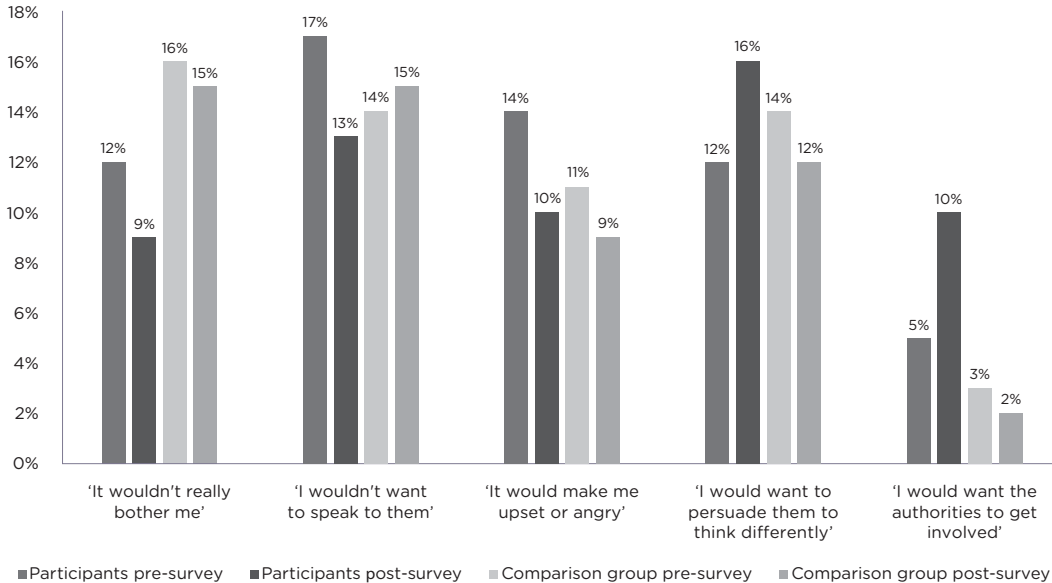

- Participants pre-survey
- Participants post-survey
- Comparison group pre-survey
- Comparison group post-survey

Figure 15 **Changes in the extent to which participants agreed with statements to take in response to civic judgement scenarios pre- and post-survey (n = 96 pre-survey, 73 post-survey; comparison group n = 104 pre-survey, 88 post-survey)**

Legend: ■Participants pre-survey ■Participants post-survey ■Comparison group pre-survey ■Comparison group post-survey

Data:
- 'It wouldn't really bother me': 12%, 9%, 16%, 15%
- 'I wouldn't want to speak to them': 17%, 13%, 14%, 15%
- 'It would make me upset or angry': 14%, 10%, 11%, 9%
- 'I would want to persuade them to think differently': 12%, 16%, 14%, 12%
- 'I would want the authorities to get involved': 5%, 10%, 3%, 2%

analysis. The proportion of justifications that could be regarded as passive declined from 34 per cent of all responses to 30 per cent, and for those involving escalation increased from 10 per cent to 15 per cent of all justifications for action (figure 16).

Additional measures

In addition to these key impact areas, another measure of confidence was included, by asking participants whether they agreed with the statement:

I feel comfortable socialising with people from different backgrounds to me.

Changing students' attitudes towards people of different backgrounds was not an objective of the intervention, but a background measure of attitudes to provide context for the other observations, ultimately in order to ensure that the subject matter of the interventions – which included discussions of white nationalism, racism and Islamist extremism – were not socially divisive.

When asked whether participants agreed with the statement 'I feel comfortable socialising with people from different backgrounds to me', there was a 1 per cent and 3 per cent change respectively for the comparison and participant groups, in the pre- and post-survey, which in the case of the comparison group was the only statistically significant change. This small variation should be considered in the context of the high baseline established in the pre-surveys, with an average level of agreement of 6.25 and 6.23 out of 7 in the participant and comparison groups respectively.

Process evaluation

As well as measuring whether the intervention had achieved its core objectives, we examined the perspectives of the pupils and teachers involved in it, and their experience of the workshops,

Figure 16 **Changes in the types of justifications for action participants took in response to civic judgement scenarios pre- and post-survey (participant group n = 96 pre-survey, 73 post-survey; comparison group n = 104 pre-survey, 88 post-survey)**
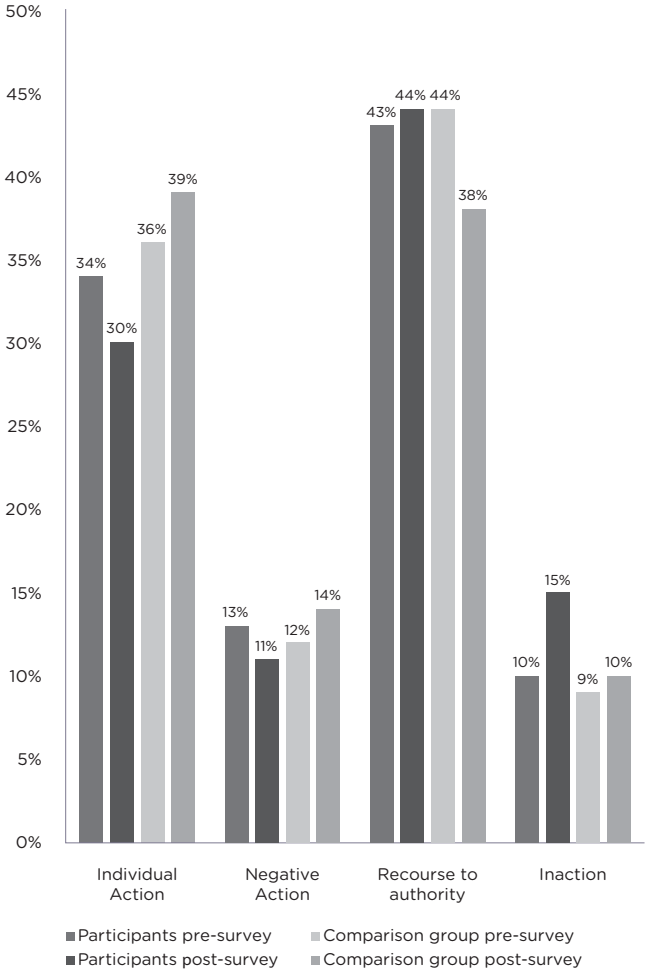
through participant focus groups, teacher interviews and the participant survey.

We did this to add context to the quantitative element of the evaluation, to provide insights into the process of delivering the workshops, and to solicit feedback to help revise and improve the resources for future delivery.

The teacher interviews were also designed to examine the extent to which the workshops met the needs of teachers, and to gauge the capacity of teachers to deliver the workshops themselves on the intended free distribution of the resources. In all cases, interviewed teachers had been present for the delivery of at least one workshop. In parallel, the focus groups with participants provided a pre-eminent opportunity to judge the success of the workshops, and examine from the most important perspective, that of the pupils, what aspects of them might be improved. All pupils involved in the focus groups had been present at both workshops.

This quantitative and qualitative process-related feedback presented a positive view of the workshops and provided a few insights into how the programme might be modified for delivery in future.

Relevance

We asked participants 'How relevant do you feel the content of the workshops was to you?' They agreed overwhelmingly that the workshops and the content covered in them was relevant to them: 77 per cent said the content of the workshops was either quite or highly relevant to them, with only 6 per cent responding that it was quite or highly irrelevant; 15 per cent felt that the content of the workshops was neither relevant nor irrelevant, and 2 per cent did not know (figure 17).

As well as stating that the material was relevant to them, a number of participants observed that these skills were particularly pertinent to them because of their age and the new challenges presented by social media:

Figure 17 **Participants' responses to the question 'How relevant do you feel the content of the workshops was to you?' (n = 66)**
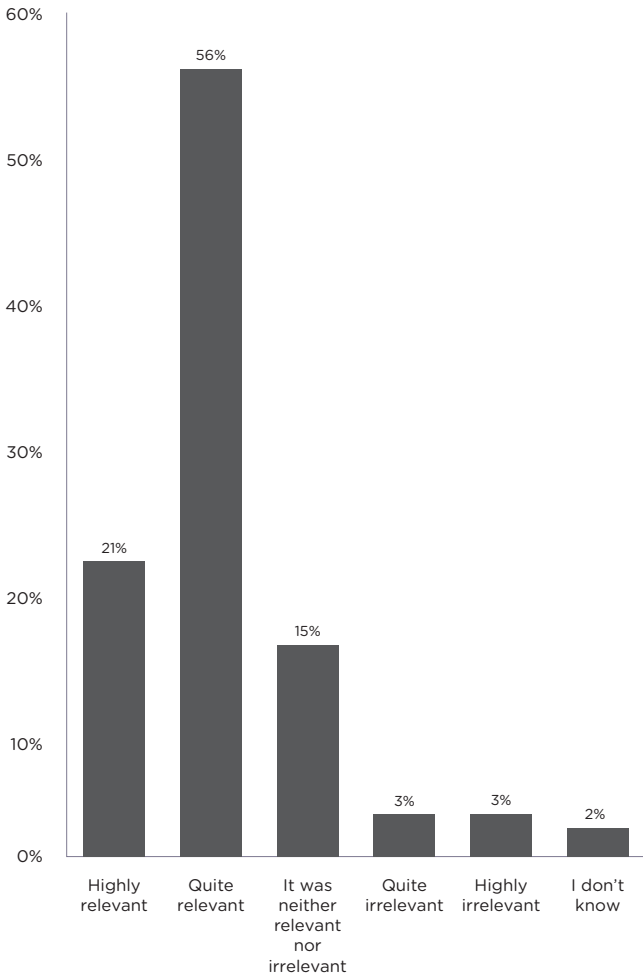
It's important for us to learn about this stuff now, so you know what to do in future.

If I was an adult, obviously I'd know what to do, because you'd understand the standards and whatever, but as a child we are vulnerable, we are more easily manipulated, because we are pretty gullible, we're really vulnerable.

I think it would be useful for younger kids as well, because they are on social media a lot as well.

As well as feeling the intervention taught them important skills, the great majority of participants thought that the workshops were age appropriate: 92 per cent said the workshops were appropriate for their age group; while 3 per cent felt they were more appropriate for younger students, another 3 per cent thought they were more appropriate for older students, and 2 per cent did not know (figure 18).

This was mirrored in the focus groups, though there was more division expressed over whether or not the intervention should be delivered to younger pupils than suggested in the survey. Some participants thought the intervention would be too sensitive or complex for younger pupils, while others felt that because younger pupils regularly used social media, they should be introduced to this kind of intervention earlier on in school life:

I think we should have had it a bit earlier to be honest. I think actually this year as a year group we'd take it in the way you're trying to deliver it as well. I don't think anyone actually took it as offensive or felt it was too sensitive. I think it was really good.

No [it's not appropriate for younger students] because they won't know what it is yet.

[I think it is appropriate for younger students] because younger kids are on social media a lot as well.

Figure 18 Participant's responses to the question 'Do you feel like the workshops were appropriate for your age group?' (n = 64)
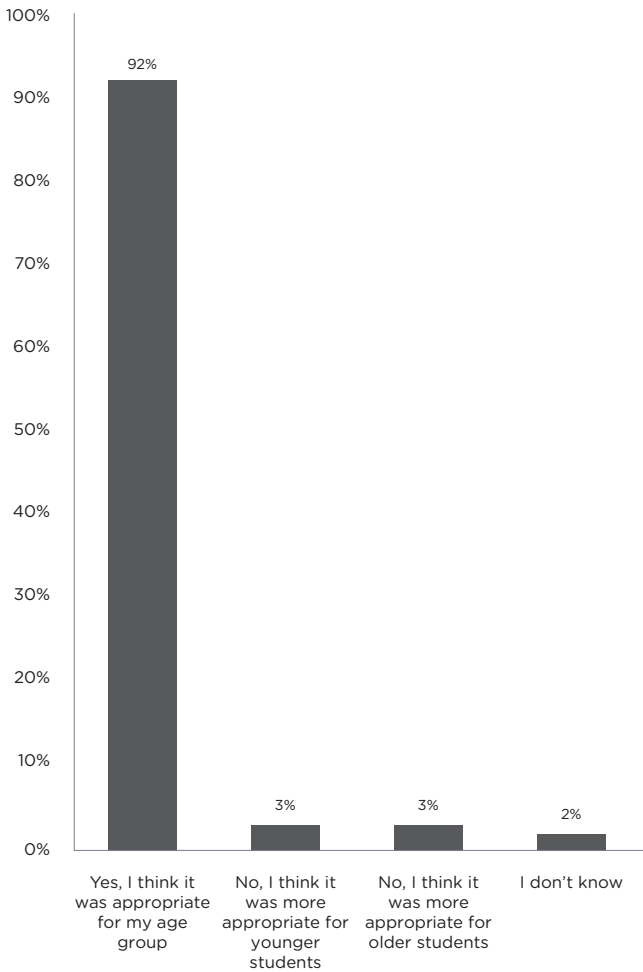
They won't be offended but in a way it's not exactly comfortable listening to… because they're younger and more nervous. We're older so we know how to deal with it.

As well as suggesting that the content was valuable, the teachers reinforced the conclusion of the participants that the material was age appropriate. One teacher suggested that the interventions would also be appropriate for younger and older audiences:

Students are very good at judging what is good and what isn't good for them in relation to age appropriate responses. I felt that they were right in saying this was not appropriate for a year 7 or 8 class, but I think for year 9 and above it would be very appropriate, up to year 12. This age group in year 9 plus, because they're all using social networking sites and are more used to IT, they are actually able to make judgements.

Another teacher suggested that because of the decreasing age at which young people are likely to first use social media, teaching digital citizenship from the start of secondary school was appropriate:

I always believe that equipping them with more knowledge at an earlier age is better for our children so I'd even go to [age] 7.

Some participants observed that this kind of intervention was particularly necessary in schools with a more mixed ethnic and religious make-up. One pupil for example suggested that in their school it was more important to talk about sensitive issues to do with intolerance and extreme opinion,

Because our school here, it's very multicultural. People are from different ethnic groups, so you really want to talk about that a bit more.

Enjoyment

Participants reported high levels of enjoyment in taking part in the workshops. This programme was a new experience for many of the

pupils in the pilot schools. Most participants had discussed extremism and radicalisation in some way in either RE, PSHE or citizenship classes. Many had also had internet safety education of some sort, but none had had an in depth discussion about extremists' use of the internet, their manipulative techniques or the appropriate responses to extremism or hate speech online.

We asked participants 'Did you enjoy taking part in the workshops?' A significant majority (80 per cent) either liked the workshops or liked them a lot, while only 6 per cent disliked the workshops, and none disliked them a lot; 14 per cent neither liked nor disliked the workshops (figure 19).

Pupils' enjoyment of the workshops was echoed in the results of the focus groups:

I enjoyed them… they were interactive and they were visual and physical as well – it was good.

They were really good, I felt like we learned new stuff and it was applicable.

It was good learning about social media and [online] behaviours, because kids our age use it lots but we don't learn about it.

This conclusion was reinforced by the class teachers; there was a consensus among them that pupils enjoyed the sessions and were engaged in the dialogue:

They really did enjoy it, looking at the focus group, the sessions, and what you've done, it's definitely been enjoyed.

The students said the examples were good, the conversation was good, and so there was good engagement.

They were treated like adults, and they did actually really like that.

Although the majority of students were engaged in the workshops, a minority of the students found it difficult to participate in them because of the informal nature of the discussion and the sensitivity of the subject matter. This was a

Figure 19 **Participants responses to the question 'Did you enjoy taking part in the workshops?' (n = 66)**

Response	Percentage
I liked it a lot	32%
I liked it	48%
I neither liked it nor disliked it	14%
I disliked it	6%
I disliked it a lot	0%
I don't know	0%
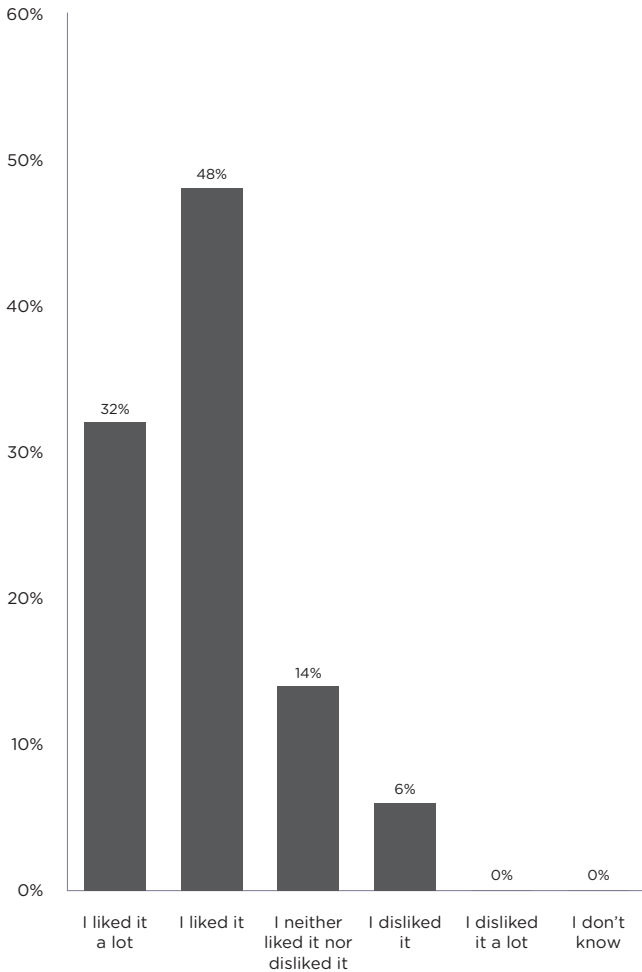
challenge for those delivering the workshops. As one teacher put it:

I think out of that group you had, there were two that generally were disengaged, didn't follow it, didn't want to certainly… yeah maybe two or three maximum.

Another teacher repeated this observation, and suggested that the layout of the classroom played a role:

I noticed some of them were standing on the side… it is difficult being aware of the class dynamics, space… They knew there were other people there watching them so that may have affected some of them speaking out more than others.

Delivery

Participants gave positive feedback regarding the delivery of the workshops. In a number of focus groups, pupils suggested that having external practitioners involved in delivering the workshops was beneficial, increasing the interest in the workshops and changing the atmosphere:

The teachers, you always see them. It's new people so it's more interesting.

[It's better] just because it's different voices. Not as formal, more casual.

It worked because it was really casual, really natural and we were involved.

We'd rather you lot, because you've got more experience… professional as well.

Some participants also suggested that they could talk more openly about the more sensitive subjects touched on in the workshops with external practitioners than they could with teachers. One said that when talking about things like extremism and hate speech, participants might feel they cannot say everything they might:

It depends… you can't exactly say (I don't mean it in the wrong way) everything because you're afraid: am I allowed to say this?

With teachers you've got to be all quiet, you can't just talk, this was more interactive.

Interviewees also suggested that having an external facilitator deliver the workshops, as with this pilot study and as would occur in any commercial delivery option, had distinct advantages as well as disadvantages, but that on balance it was superior to the alternative of having the teacher deliver the workshops. As one teacher put it,

I think it's nice for students to have external speakers. Sometimes they pay more attention to external visitors.

Another suggested that as a general rule for this kind of intervention external speakers were preferable, but that the appropriateness of having a teacher conduct the session varied from teacher to teacher as some have a better relationship with pupils than others:

They actually like having speakers because they can open up more, and the fact that they're not seeing you all the time makes them deal with the situation being put to them differently. Sometimes I think it comes down to the rapport the tutor has with the class, which can affect the dynamics, can affect that session.

However, teachers were also aware that discussing sensitive subjects with external facilitators could in some circumstances make students less likely to speak their minds, as they do not know the facilitators, but might have known their teachers for many years:

I've been with this class for four years and they can say anything they like to me and they know that, within parameters, I'm not going to be offended, I'm never going to be offended by what they say. I'm always going to

challenge if I feel that that is not appropriate. [An external facilitator] won't have that in terms of that relationship.

It's a trust thing, isn't it? The students, especially with controversial issues for them, they are very wary of strangers, they're very wary of letting their true feelings out.

Teachers were generally positive about the quality of the delivery by the workshop facilitators. One suggested that the fact that the facilitators delivering the workshops were relatively young meant that they could relate well to the students, in turn making the conversation more open and easy-going:

The fact that you had younger people, fantastic. The chemistry between the two of them, as in always one was interspersing real experience in with the delivery – perfect.

I thought the delivery was great because both [the delivery staff] were enthusiastic, tolerant, patient and very passionate about the subject.

One criticism made was that during one of the first workshops there was too much delivery of information and too little dialogue: '[They] worked well as a team, just the only negative was talking too much.'

Despite the positive reception and these positive reviews of the workshops delivery, the fact that a large amount of information conveyed in a short period of time created time pressure, and some participants felt that the sessions were sometimes rushed towards the end. Some participants thought the revision element was crucial.

It felt a bit rushed.

Some stuff was easier than others. After you went over the information a second time we remembered.

Like there wasn't enough explaining some things… Just like being able to summarise what's been going on in the session, so it like recaps them a bit.

A number of the teachers interviewed agreed with the participants that the volume of content delivered within the workshops was significant. One teacher suggested that the subject was complex enough to justify delivery and revision over 'three to four' workshops.

Resources

Most teachers and participants regarded the resources deployed in the workshops positively, but focus group participants had mixed views on which of the two workshops they enjoyed most and was delivered most effectively. The first workshop was based around a digital slide deck, which presented social media conversations interactively; the second was based on physical cards laid out on the floor one by one in a conversation chain, with all pupils participating as a single group. These are some of the participants' comments on them:

I'd say the second one [was better] because, again, everyone was more involved in that. Whereas in the first one we were just all, you know, there's a lot of information rather than doing the activities. So it was good in that sense.

I thought cards were more interesting because we actually got physically engaged.

I thought they were both good.

I go between the two because the one with the cards, when we got up to look at the other people's cards, it was too crowded.

Some suggested that more video content should be included to help summarise learning points:

I'd like more videos because personally I think they let us visualize it more and understand it better.

While the students were divided on the subject of which approaches were preferable, teachers were positive about the interactive approaches deployed in general:

The presentation and the PowerPoint really worked, it was great because it had animations in there, it had things they'd not seen... so they were impressed with that. They liked the presentation.

They seemed to like the games. The game you had in the second session where they choose particular scenarios, we do use that a lot in PSHE and we do like it... It actually challenges them; it does actually make them think. It's quite philosophical isn't it? It gets them to think about why. It tests those who think 'I don't understand it' and 'I don't know anything about this'. They seemed to like that because it meant they all took part.

They seemed to like videos, they stressed they wanted more videos so I thought that was good.

They seemed to have liked it [the first workshop], they enjoyed the illustrations because they were all discussing [them] together.

Sensitivity

Throughout the workshops delivery staff had to be aware of, and actively explore, the sensitivity of the subject in specific contexts and classrooms. On the one hand, the more open the discussion, and the more explicit it was about extremism, the more constructive the dialogue. On the other hand, facilitators were keen not to alienate or upset pupils, and were aware that if poorly conducted such discussions could have a negative effect.

Teachers were confident that participants were not offended by the content of the workshops or the way they were presented, and that other potential participants would be unlikely to be offended:

We as teachers think that pupils are afraid that they don't want to talk about [extremism], but they do want to talk about it and it's important that they have their say, rather than blame the students or actually say oh well it's too sensitive or we shouldn't cover it.

However, some teachers were unwilling to discuss particularly sensitive issues, such as violent extremism. One outlined why teachers from particular backgrounds might be more or less willing to engage in certain conversations on values and beliefs, or political or social phenomena related to identity:

Every school will have their fears and their sensitivities and might say we will only act when something happens… Some staff suggest to me that it might be OK for me to talk about particular topics, coming from a particular ethnic background and being Muslim – I can get away with saying particular things and it won't be seen that I'm being offensive. Whereas quite a few members of staff might feel sensitive, for example thinking 'Well I don't really feel I should say that, is it my place to say that? How will it sound?' So instead of just going along and trying it, they're saying, 'I'm not going to go there.'

The observation that teachers might well not be willing to discuss certain important but sensitive issues related to values and beliefs is itself an additional argument for using external facilitators to deliver the workshops.

These workshops were delivered at a time of changing school policies and duties on extremism and radicalisation, and changes in the way use of technology by students is approached in schools. Mobile phones had recently been banned in two of the schools that participated in the pilot study. Teachers were aware, however, that schools cannot see their role as merely reducing access to social media or enforcing behaviour management, but must also teach young people how to use important social media resources safely and effectively. One teacher highlighted how reduced access to social media in school could not itself be the solution:

They are no longer allowed to use mobile phones in school. This is the first year where we've decided not to allow that. That was simply because, simply because their behaviour as well as cyber bullying cases… I've felt that it has actually made a big difference evaluating this year and how it's gone. But we have had cases obviously of when they go home, they will for example want to send a text message to another student outside. And then sometimes it becomes an in-school issue because it starts to grow.

While teachers recognised that some staff members might be reluctant to address issues of extremism and radicalisation in such a direct way, teachers acknowledged that discussing these issues in class was important, and that the workshops delivered as part of the pilot project represented a vehicle through which to address a number of areas that schools are specifically concerned with, from British values to the citizenship curriculum and elements of schools' spiritual, moral, social and cultural obligations:

I think for the moment the school's agenda and Ofsted means you are in a very advantageous position… because you can say we're covering anti-radicalisation, cyber bullying or internet safety, but also making pupils aware of what's going on out there in terms of social networking, which they do need to know, especially nowadays. Citizenship is compulsory anyway. Safeguarding is a priority now in schools, so if you incorporate that into safeguarding and British values, which seems to be the big thing the government is talking about at the moment and wanting us to deliver…

The Prevent context

Teachers had varied understandings of and opinions on the Prevent strategy and its implications, but understood how this programme might reinforce and support its objectives, and why it was being pursued in schools. In all of the schools, teachers were aware of why this kind of intervention might be useful in their school specifically. One teacher suggested that if the Prevent programme and schools' new duties under it was making schools talk about issues of extremism and radicalisation, that

was a positive thing: 'Prevent is positive in making schools deliver [safeguarding].'

However, it was also suggested that the duties on schools could reduce the space for debate by increasing worry among children and parents that engaging in such a debate might have negative impacts for students, and make them reluctant to talk about these issues. Moreover, concerned about their safeguarding role, teachers might be less willing to solicit potentially extreme views from students:

It does have its disadvantages, where you have parents [who] don't want their children to open up to talk about particular subjects because they fear that if they say something, 'Oh they might be seen to be extremists and might be reported' and some Muslim parents may deliberately tell their children 'Do not take part in conversations like that' because it might get them into trouble. It's OK to have that freedom of speech and to ask that question but we do need to be careful because if you do get a particular person who is saying that particular phrase [on] more than one occasion and it kind of develops into a hate thing, then actually we do need to be worried.

This feedback reinforces the case for guidance and subject-specific delivery from specialised external partners.

6 Conclusion

This project set out to develop, test and evaluate new resources to help schools deliver their Prevent duty. It sought to fill a gap within the existing landscape of CVE and digital citizenship resources and aimed to establish a new, evidence-based and effective skills-based digital citizenship intervention, designed to increase the resilience of young people to extremism and radicalisation online. It further attempted to advance the evidence base in this area, to support future intervention development.

As the evaluative evidence demonstrates, our pilot intervention was broadly successful in achieving the objectives set out at the beginning of the project. In all three areas of impact that were the focus of the intervention – critical thinking skills, online responsibilities and how social media change how we communicate – we achieved statistically significant impacts. Teachers viewed the workshops favourably, and participants felt they were relevant, and understood and enjoyed them.

The evaluation will also inform the further development and improvement of these resources in the future. Demos plans to expand this series of workshops from two to three sessions, in order to allow for a greater degree of revision and review of the content. Demos further plans to develop more holistic teacher guidance and supporting documentation in order to reduce the knowledge threshold required for teachers to deliver these resources themselves. Following the success of this intervention, and having made revisions to these resources, Demos plans to deliver our interventions in schools in partnership with Bold Creative, and make these resources available online for free.

Our evaluation has added to the public evidence base regarding Prevent interventions in a school context, an area where very little evidence exists. Moreover, our best practice review and examination of existing, related interventions has

allowed us to identify the general characteristics of a successful intervention related to extremism and its online aspects. The lack of evidence on what does and does not work in counter-extremism interventions in schools has been a barrier to effective intervention development. We hope that those developing future interventions consider the evidence presented in this report and in doing so increase the impact of their own projects.

This project has wider implications for CVE in schools. Currently, the focus of Prevent interventions delivered in schools is overwhelmingly values based, and is indeed often tied into the British values agenda. This is a difficult space, in which complex and abstracted notions of identity, political and religious beliefs collide. Our project has demonstrated how – alongside interventions focused on the creation of positive narratives or discussions of identity – digital citizenship education can play a core role in the delivery of the Prevent duty in schools, in a manner which builds up wider critical skills, does not alienate pupils, and cuts to the heart of the problem of online extremism and radicalisation. What is more, teachers and students recognise the importance of this subject and are keen to engage with it.

Digital citizenship education is not just an effective way to increase the resilience of young people to extremism. It can create more critical citizens, informed consumers and community-minded social media users. The skills developed through digital citizenship education apply not just to the fight against extremism on the margins of our society – they present an important way to reduce the political polarisation that runs through the heart of it. The Prevent duty on schools is still new, and schools are still adapting to their new responsibilities. As they do so, digital citizenship should sit at the heart of their efforts.

Technical appendix

Demos designed the comparison and participant surveys used in the evaluation of this pilot, and piloted early drafts of them with a focus group of young people in order to ensure their relevance and accessibility, although with insufficient numbers to test statistical validity. Teachers delivered the surveys, which participants returned by post. We informed respondents from the participant groups that the surveys would help us assess the workshops, and told respondents from the comparison group that the surveys would help us assess workshops going on in their school, which may have influenced their responses.

In the pre- and post-surveys, there were two and four main question sections respectively, each of which sought different types of quantitative data.

We first asked respondents to provide basic administrative information, such as the date and the school they went to; in the post-survey we asked them to state whether they had attended the first and second workshops.

In the first question section, we presented respondents in both the pre- and post-surveys with a series of four social media scenarios, each of which involved digital citizenship in the context of extremism or hate speech. In each case, we asked participants to choose from a list of 11 actions they would take when confronted with the scenario, and 11 associated justifications for this action. The details and analysis of these questions is explained in more detail in chapter 5.

The second section in both the pre- and post-surveys presented respondents with a series of seven-point Likert scales, ranging from strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1), each measuring their level of agreement with ten statements. Nine were impact measures, and one, 'I feel comfortable socialising with people from different backgrounds to me', provided

contextual data. These questions concerned social media habits, as in the statement 'I actively seek out and understand viewpoints that differ from my own', or levels of confidence about certain skills, for example, 'I am confident I know how to differentiate between truth and lies on social media.' Demos designed these questions to provide a robust measure of impact.

In the third section of the post-survey only, we presented respondents with two questions, asking them to list as many of the three methods of manipulation and the three principles of digital savviness as they could. We designed these questions to measure the degree of short-term knowledge recall of the precise terms participants learned. The recall of these terms is not a critical part of the intervention, but through measuring levels of recall, researchers could observe which parts of the intervention had been remembered most successfully, and rebalance the intervention accordingly for future delivery.

In the fourth section of the post-survey only we asked respondents a series of process questions on their experience of the workshops, asking them to rate their approval on a series of Likert scales of four to six points. Some questions were also relevant to impact measurement, such as 'Do you feel like you learned new skills or gained knowledge from the workshops?' and some related directly to the delivery process, such as 'Did you enjoy taking part in the workshops?' We designed these questions to help Demos researchers understand the strengths and weakness of the delivery and modify the resources for future delivery accordingly.

These questions were based on the process evaluation questions deployed in previous Demos evaluations and modified for this intervention. With quantitative process measures, it is important to consider what might be a measure of success, as successful effect is less self-evident in process evaluation than in impact measurement. In the planning stages of the intervention, Demos set the goal of achieving an 80 per cent positive response to process questions as the standard for success on that measure.

Significance testing

Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter and the need for anonymity, pre- and post-survey data was anonymous and collected as unmatched data, within both the participant group and the comparison groups. This means that significance testing that compares changes in the participant group with changes in the comparison group was not possible. Instead we used the Mann Whitney Wilcoxon test for significance testing of the pre- and post-survey results of the participant group, with the comparison group serving as an indicator of other changes within the schools in question.

The same four classes undertook the pre- and post-surveys, and all respondents in the participant group post-survey had attended both workshops as part of the programme, granting a high degree of similarity. We used Morris' (2008) preferred formula for pretest-posttest-control group research designs to calculate standardised effect sizes for each measure.[98] Table 1 shows the effect size calculations and the percentage change between pre- and post-surveys in both groups.

Table 1   **Effect size calculations, based on Likert responses in the pre- and post-surveys (1–7 Likert scale, 1 strongly disagree – 7 strongly agree)**

	'I feel comfortable socialising with people from different back-grounds to me'	'I actively seek out and understand viewpoints that differ from my own'	'When I post, share, or distribute messages online, I think about how they might affect other people'	'I understand what behaving well online consists of'	I would know what to do if I'm confronted with hate speech online'
Participant pre-survey	6.25	5.223404	5.452632	6.244681	5.052632
Participant post-survey	6.283784	5.394366	5.30137	6.263889	5.575342
Participant % change	1%	3%	-3%	0%	0%
WMW test* p-value	0.7776	0.3827	0.4669	0.8171	0.0200
Comparison pre-survey	6.228571	5.192308	5.359223	6.240385	5.384615
Comparison post-survey	6.431818	5.159091	5.655172	6.303371	5.168539
Comparison % change	3%	-1%	6%	1% - 4%	5%
WMW test p-value	0.0473	0.9297	0.1836	0.4911	0.5006

Table 1 **Effect size calculations, based on Likert responses in the pre- and post-surveys (1–7 Likert scale, 1 strongly disagree – 7 strongly agree) –** *continued*

	'I feel comfortable socialising with people from different back-grounds to me'	'I actively seek out and understand viewpoints that differ from my own'	'When I post, share, or distribute messages online, I think about how they might affect other people'	'I understand what behaving well online consists of'	I would know what to do if I'm confronted with hate speech online'
Pre-participant and comparison group comparison (WMW test p-value)	0.3349	0.7285	0.7066	0.7886	0.0828
Morris effect size calculation					
Treatment difference of means	0.033784	0.170962	-0.151262	0.019208	0.52271
Control difference of means	0.203247	-0.033217	0.295949	0.062986	-0.216076
Difference of difference	-0.169463	0.204179	-0.447211	-0.043778	0.738786
Pooled pre-test standard deviation	1.200207	1.421843	1.582806	1.074576	1.566294
Effect size	**–0.141194811**	**0.143601649**	**-0.282543154**	**-0.040739789**	**0.471677731**

* Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test

Table 1
Effect size calculations, based on Likert responses in the pre- and post-surveys (1–7 Likert scale, 1 strongly disagree – 7 strongly agree) – *continued*

	'I am confident I know how to differentiate between truth and lies on social media'	'I am confident that I could challenge extremist opinions online'	'I understand what techniques are used to manipulate people on social media'	'I understand what an echo chamber is'	'I understand what being a keyboard warrior is.'
Participant pre-survey	5.225806	4.434783	5.043011	1.752688	4.138298
Participant post-survey	5.760563	4.863014	5.671429	5.328767	6.123288
Participant % change	10%	10%	12%	204%	48%
WMW test* p-value	0.0199	0.1018	0.0053	<0.0001	<0.0001
Comparison pre-survey	5.384615	4.37	5.211538	2.883495	4.582524
Comparison post-survey	5.662921	4.528736	5.352273	2.94186	5.116279
Comparison % change	5%	4%	3%	2%	12%
WMW test p-value	0.0874	0.5641	0.8403	0.9037	0.1572

Table 1 **Effect size calculations, based on Likert responses in the pre- and post-surveys (1–7 Likert scale, 1 strongly disagree – 7 strongly agree) –** *continued*

	'I am confident I know how to differentiate between truth and lies on social media'	'I am confident that I could challenge extremist opinions online'	'I understand what techniques are used to manipulate people on social media'	'I understand what an echo chamber is'	'I understand what being a keyboard warrior is.'
Pre-participant and comparison group comparison (WMW test p-value)	0.5492	0.8279	0.2086	<0.0001	0.1994
Morris effect size calculation					
Treatment difference of means	0.534757	0.428231	0.628418	3.576079	1.98499
Control difference of means	0.278306	0.158736	0.140735	0.058365	0.533755
Difference of difference	0.256451	0.269495	0.487683	3.517714	1.451235
Pooled pre-test standard deviation	1.500181	1.716118	1.504731	2.202428	2.338366
Effect size	**0.170946706**	**0.15703757**	**0.324099789**	**1.597198183**	**0.62061927**

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The last half a century has witnessed a burgeoning information revolution that has transformed our societies beyond recognition. The development of sophisticated computing, the technological reorientation of vast segments of the global workforce, the invention of the internet and most recently the proliferation of social media technology has radically changed the ways we work, live, develop and communicate. Political extremism and violent radicalism have not been excluded from this growing trend, with social media being used as a tool for the recruitment and exploitation of young people by extremist groups.

As a result, the development of digital citizenship in our young people, to help them navigate these new online challenges, has become an urgent need. British schools are responsible for identifying and building resilience against radicalisation as part of their duty of care. Many of the skills required to combat the influence of extremism and the ability of terrorist groups to exploit and manipulate young people are already taught in schools, through existing personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and citizenship efforts, the British values agenda and the work of individual school leaders and teachers. However, there is a dearth of high quality resources designed to increase the resilience of young people to extremism and radicalisation in a digital context.

This report summarises the results of a pilot project which seeks to address this gap by developing, testing and evaluating new resources to help schools tackle online radicalisation. Based on the analysis of a survey of existing materials and a best practise review, it presents a digital citizenship intervention, developed by Demos and Bold Creative, designed to build this resilience to extremism, and measures its impact through a pilot study delivered in schools.At a time when the growth of social media combined with the influence of extremism makes it more important than ever, this report adds to the public evidence base regarding counter-extremism interventions in a school context, and contributes to the development of effective education for digital citizenship.

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