

MEDIA LITERACY & COMMUNITY TV

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December 2021



Community Television Association



This report has been prepared on behalf of the Community Television Association of Ireland

“Media literacy is the key to empowering people with the skills and knowledge to understand how media works in this changing environment, to interrogate the accuracy of information, to counter unfair and inaccurate representation, to challenge extremist views and, ultimately, to make better informed media choices.”¹

“Media literacy is the ability to identify different types of media and understand the messages they're sending...all media shares one thing: Someone created it. And it was created for a reason. Understanding that reason is the basis of media literacy.”²

“Media literacy allows us to question the intent of media and protect ourselves from any negative impacts of media.”³

“media literacy is the expected outcome of media education”⁴

¹ Broadcasting Authority of Ireland Media Literacy Policy 2016 https://www.bai.ie/en/media/sites/2/dlm_uploads/2016/12_BAI_media_literacy_policy_EN1.pdf

² What is media literacy, and why is it important?
<https://www.common sense media.org/news-and-media-literacy/what-is-media-literacy-and-why-is-it-important>

³ What is media literacy and why does it matter?
<https://www.futurelearn.com/info/blog/what-is-media-literacy>

⁴ Critical Media Literacy Education in Ireland, Lucia Chisholm, *Critical Social Thinking: Policy and Practice*, Vol. 5, 2013
<https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/academic/appliedsocialstudies/docs/LuciaChisholm.pdf>



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COMMUNITY TELEVISION ASSOCIATION

The Irish Community Television Association (CTA) was formed in 2006.

The CTA represents and promotes the interests of the community television sector in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Its members are community television stations and community producer organisations working under a common charter.

- The objectives of CTA are:
- To build a cohesive community television sector with a shared vision
- To increase public understanding of the ethos and purpose of community television
- To help build the capacity of the community television sector
- To influence the legal, policy and regulatory environment for community television
- To attract and secure resources for the community television sector
- To communicate and collaborate with counterpart organisations in other countries.⁵

Members of Community Television Association:

- Cork Community Television
- Dublin Community Television
- Ballymun Communications
- North Leitrim Community Video
- NEAR TV
- Cork Community Media Hub (formerly Frameworks Films)



⁵ Community Television in Ireland: An Overview Whitebarn Consulting, December 2017

BROADCASTING AUTHORITY OF IRELAND: MEDIA LITERACY POLICY

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland launched its Media Literacy Policy in December 2016.

The overarching object of the BAI Media Literacy Policy is: “To empower Irish people with the skills and knowledge to make informed choices about the media content and services that they consume, create and disseminate.”⁶

The BAI’s Media Literacy Policy identifies 5 Strategic Policy Objectives:

- 1 To provide leadership and facilitate a coordinated approach to the promotion of media literacy in Ireland.
- 2 To describe and promote media literacy among citizens, consumers and stakeholders, in a manner that is relevant and meaningful.
- 3 To encourage a wide range of stakeholders to participate in the promotion of media literacy, in line with their specific business and strategic priorities.
- 4 To foster media literacy research and the development of a comprehensive knowledge base.
- 5 To develop a policy that is strategically aligned to other key learning frameworks and policies.
- 6 The core of the BAI’s Media Literacy Policy is a framework for the promotion of media literacy. This framework consists of three core media literacy competencies and a set of associated skills and success indicators.



⁶ BAI Media Literacy Policy 2016 https://www.bai.ie/en/media/sites/2/dlm_uploads/2016/12/BAI_media_literacy_policy_EN1.pdf

3 Core Competencies:

- 1 Understand and critically evaluate broadcast, digital and other media content and services, in order to make informed choices and best manage media use.
- 2 Access and use broadcast and digital media content and services in a safe and secure manner, to maximise opportunities and minimise risks.
- 3 Create and participate, via media, in a responsible, ethical and effective manner, in the creative, cultural and democratic aspects of society.

The policy acknowledges that this is a really broad area so stakeholders aren't expected to do everything: "stakeholders are not expected to address each competency or its associated skills and success indicators. This framework is specifically designed to allow stakeholders to adopt a 'pick and mix' approach, where they can identify which media literacy skills most closely align with their core business and their own strategic priorities."⁷

The BAI's Media Literacy Policy announced the intention to set up an Irish Media Literacy Network which was subsequently established.

Media Literacy Ireland is an independent association of members committed to the promotion of media literacy across Ireland. It focuses on four main areas of activity: Coordination, Connection, Communication, Campaigning.⁸

COMMUNITY TV AND MEDIA LITERACY

This report explores how the members of the Irish Community Television Association have incorporated media literacy into their activities.

These activities are assessed in relation to their success in meeting the objectives and core competencies as set out in the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's Media Literacy Policy.

There are two main areas of focus:

- Media literacy as a core part of the work of Community TV companies and Community Media Producers.
- Some examples of Community Programmes produced and broadcast that directly address Media Literacy.

⁶ BAI Media Literacy Policy 2016 https://www.bai.ie/en/media/sites/2/dlm_uploads/2016/12/BAI_media_literacy_policy_EN1.pdf
<https://www.medialiteracyireland.ie/about>

⁷ BAI Media Literacy Policy 2016 https://www.bai.ie/en/media/sites/2/dlm_uploads/2016/12/BAI_media_literacy_policy_EN1.pdf

⁸ <https://www.medialiteracyireland.ie/about>

MEDIA LITERACY: CORE WORK OF COMMUNITY TV

Media Literacy is at the core of the work of Community Television. “It trickles through everything that we do.”⁹

Through their core work members of the Community Television Association support and enable communities to develop media literacy skills and competencies.

A 2017 report, *Community Television in Ireland: An Overview*, found that “Community television gives voice to people and grassroots groups that are unrepresented or underrepresented in mainstream media.”¹⁰

The report provided an overview of what Community Television entails: “Community television encompasses:

- Process – the active participation of community members in the creation of programming
- Product – a service to communities through the programming that is supplied.”¹¹

Through its core activities, community television offers an important tool for Media Literacy.

“A major aspect of Media Literacy is about giving people the capacity to produce media for themselves and this goes hand in hand with the ethos of Community Television.”¹²

By working WITH community, particularly communities whose voices and perspectives are rarely heard, and supporting those communities to make and broadcast their own programmes, Community Television promotes media literacy and the core competencies and skills encouraged by the BAI Media Literacy Policy.

Engagement with Community TV companies and Community Content Producers, leads to an increase in media literacy for members of the public and of a wide range of communities.

This is particularly important for communities who often see themselves and their communities misrepresented in mainstream media programmes.

Media bias can impact on the selection and slant of stories covered or broadcast by media. Community TV plays an important role in counterbalancing this media bias by creating and broadcasting programmes that focus on communities and issues not usually covered, or covered incorrectly, by mainstream media.

A key part of media literacy is about assessing what is true in media: understanding media bias and how this impacts on the selection and slant of stories covered or broadcast by media. A lot of media programmes and documentaries are produced ABOUT other communities or groups and are

⁹ Elaine King, NearTV, Community TV Association Focus Group, November 2021

¹⁰ 2017 report *Community Television in Ireland: An Overview*

¹¹ 2017 report *Community Television in Ireland: An Overview*

¹² NearTV funding proposal *Control Yourself*

often inaccurate or misleading. One of the most powerful ways to counteract this is to produce programmes WITH the communities where there is a high level of involvement in the planning and production processes – leading to more accurate and truthful programmes. This is at the core of the work of Community Content Producers and Community TV.

A 2016 report on the work of Cork Community TV found “that CCTv provides a unique, invaluable service to community groups in Cork, providing a platform for the broadcasting of programmes by and about communities. As the *Keep It On My Radar!* Report finds: “Cork Community TV provides a unique service for communities in Cork, enabling the broadcasting of programmes made by and about communities in Cork. CCTv broadcasts programmes that people wouldn’t be able to see elsewhere. CCTv is about real communities and real issues. It is empowering for communities who see themselves reflected and involved. This is particularly important for communities that feel excluded and disenfranchised. It allows people’s voice to be heard and to be valued.”¹³

The Centre for Media Literacy in Canada identified Media Arts Education as one of the key components of Critical Media Literacy Education. Media Arts Education is a “creative and aesthetic approach to the process of developing media literacy skills, such as scriptwriting and production, using digital cameras, lighting and sound.”¹⁴ This is essentially what the members of the Community Television Association do. By involving communities in the production process it demystifies the process and helps to develop skills that can be used to evaluate media and increasing media literacy. “When people in communities get involved in developing and producing television programmes it demystifies television and helps people to understand better the processes involved in making television programmes.”¹⁵ This helps people to then be better able to evaluate the programmes they watch on TV, further increasing their media literacy.

One example of the way in which members of the Community Television Association promote media literacy is the engagement between Frameworks Films in Cork and asylum seekers living in Direct Provision in Cork. There was an exploration of the myths about asylum seekers and of the ways in which refugees and asylum seekers are represented / misrepresented in the media. The participants then decided how they would like to be portrayed and on the film they would like to create. Training in media production skills was provided to the participants and they were supported to make their own programme, which was broadcast on Cork Community TV. This approach taken by Frameworks Films would be replicated in their work with a wide range of organisations and communities and in the work of other members of the Community Television Association.¹⁶

Members of the Community Television Association also provide media literacy for volunteers.

NearTV positions media literacy at the heart of their work. All volunteers to NearTV must complete a media training course which includes, Media Literacy and Law as well as production skills and techniques. “Media Literacy and community television training are at the core of the work NearTV does in the community.”¹⁷

NearTV were also involved in the development of a Media Education Without Borders programme under the Erasmus+ programme.

¹³ *Keep It On My Radar!* Orla Egan 2016

¹⁴ <https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/academic/appliedsocialstudies/docs/LuciaChisholm.pdf>

¹⁵ Iris Park, DCTV Community TV Association Focus Group, November 2021

¹⁶ Emma Howell, Frameworks Films, Community TV Association Focus Group, November 2021

¹⁷ NearTV funding proposal Control Yourself

DCTV also provide training for new volunteers. This combines practical on-the-ground training with an online training course, which includes a module on Media Literacy. The volunteers are given a certificate on completion of this course.

Members of the Community Television Association engage with communities across a range media platforms and services. One example of this is the way in which DCTV used Facebook to reach participants for a programme being produced on six non-national communities in Ireland.

COMMUNITY MEDIA LITERACY PROGRAMMES

A number of programmes that focus specifically on media literacy have been produced by Community Television and Community Producers and broadcast on Community TV stations in Ireland. Some of these will be discussed below.

- 2010 Control Yourself - NearTV
- 2014 Equal Billing - NearTV
- 2015 Edit Delete - NearTV
- 2016 Me And The Media - Frameworks Films
- 2018 Know Your Media - Frameworks Films

These programmes have been funded under the BAI's Sound and Vision Scheme.



CONTROLYOURSELF: NEAR TV

Control Yourself is an innovative media literacy television series on stereotypes, produced by teenagers for teenagers.

Four half hour studio programmes were produced with young people from the Northside Partnership Youth Leadership Programme. An additional four short 15 minute 'Behind the Scenes' programmes were produced providing training on how the programmes were produced.

Control Yourself had an explicit aim of increasing media literacy by working with young people to increase their understanding of media, of the portrayal of teenagers by the media and support them to make their own programmes to provide a more accurate image of teenage life in Dublin. NearTV provided media literacy skills and production training to the young people prior to starting production on the programmes.

There were four Studio Programmes produced as part of the Control Yourself series:

- **Programme One:** Stereotypes on Age (Youth, Hoodies and the Media)
- **Programme Two:** Gender and Stereotypes
- **Programme Three:** Beauty and Body Image
- **Programme Four:** Youth Culture Stereotypes

Four 'Behind the Scenes' training programmes were produced:

- **Programme One:** Camera and Sound
- **Programme Two:** Lighting and Interview Techniques
- **Programme Three:** Composition and Location Shooting
- **Programme Four:** Editing and Uploading Videos



EQUAL BILLING: NEAR TV

Equal Billing is a Media Literacy Community Television Series looking at discrimination in films, produced by NearTV.

Equal Billing is a Media Literacy series in which a group of Irish people and migrants look at films and discuss them in a relaxed after dinner environment.

Each episode is based on one of the nine grounds for discrimination as defined by the Equal Status Act including:

- Gender,
- Civil (marital) status,
- Family status,
- Sexual orientation,
- Religion,
- Age,
- Disability,
- Race
- Membership of the Traveller Community.

The aim of the series from a Media Literacy point of view is to analyse the movies based on these grounds and highlight the different ways films can reinforce or highlight discrimination.

EDIT DELETE: NEAR TV

Edit Delete is a three part television series which aimed to improve media literacy amongst young people.

The series was made with young people aged 15-22 who attended Sphere17 Regional youth service in Darndale, Dublin. In the programmes the young people reflected on media construction and how it influences them and the world around them. Each programme focused on a specific theme: body image, relationships and gender. Each episode of the magazine series included interviews, facilitated discussions, vox pops and spoof advertisements. Through these different elements the young people gained a real understanding into the ways meaning is created through media, as well as producing an entertaining series for other young people.

Three programmes were produced as part of the **Edit Delete** series:

- **Episode One:** The impact media can have (with a particular focus on Body Image)
- **Episode Two:** How to analyse media (with a particular focus on Relationships)
- **Episode Three:** How to deal with Media (with a particular focus on Gender)

ME AND THE MEDIA: FRAMEWORKS FILMS

In 2016 Frameworks Films produced a series of programmes, **Me And The Media** that focused explicitly on Media Literacy.

Me And The Media was a five part educational series on media literacy. During the course of the first four programmes, an intergenerational group from Mahon in Cork were filmed as they learned about media literacy, during a structured set of four modules. As part of these four modules they learned to access, analyse and evaluate the media. They then created their own media piece about media literacy which formed the final episode of the series.

The aim of the **Me And The Media** programmes was to teach Media Literacy. The participants were taken through the key concepts of media literacy and taught the basic skills which would enable them to access, analyse, evaluate and create media messages.

Five programmes were produced as part of the **Me And The Media** series.

- **Episode One** was a general introduction to Media Literacy concepts and the link between media and culture.
- **Episode Two** looked at what is meant by text in media literacy and looked at the language of persuasion.
- **Episode Three** looked at how media messages are constructed and how to deconstruct these. It also looked at the audience in relation to the media.
- **Episode Four** looked at how to create media and provided an overview of Community Media.
- **Episode Five** was a half hour programme on Media Literacy, devised by the group themselves. It covered some of the key concepts that the group learnt over the four modules with a particular Cork slant.

The aim was that by the end of the course the participants would:

- Understand how media messages create meaning
- Identify who created a particular media message
- Recognize what the media maker wants us to believe or do
- Name the 'tools of persuasion' used
- Recognize bias, spin and misinformation
- Discover the part of the story that's not being told
- Evaluate media messages based on their own experiences, beliefs and values
- Create and distribute their own media messages

These programmes were broadcast on Cork Community TV.

KNOW YOUR MEDIA: FRAMEWORKS FILMS

Know Your Media was produced by Frameworks Films in 2018. It is a six part magazine type programme made by young people for young people about media literacy.

The series was a collaboration between Frameworks Films and a group of young people from the Cork Life Centre (set up in 2000 to provide an alternative learning environment for young people).

There are six short ten minute programmes. Each programme is presented by young people from The Cork Life Centre.

Episode One:

- Media Literacy Concept: Media constructs our culture and that media messages affect our thoughts, attitudes and actions
- Media usage question: What type of media do you use?
- Media Profile: Facebook Messenger; Representation of an issue in the media: How the media in general impacts on our lives

Episode 2:

- Media Literacy Concept: Media uses the “language of persuasion”.
- Media usage question: Who do you engage with when you’re using social media and how long do you spend using them?
- Media Profile: WhatsApp; Representation of an issue in the media: Gender

Episode Three:

- Media Literacy Concept: No one tells the whole story
- Media usage question: What do you know about who owns and controls the media that you use?
- Media Profile: You Tube; Representation of an issue in the media: Disability issues

Episode Four:

- Media Literacy Concept: Media messages contain ‘texts’ and ‘subtexts’
- Media usage question: What are the positives about the different types of media that you use?
- Media Profile: Instagram; Representation of an issue in the media: Race & Minority Groups

Episode Five:

- Media Literacy Concept: Media messages reflect the values and viewpoints of media makers.
- Media usage question: What are the negatives about the different types of media that you use?
- Media Profile: Facetime; Representation of an issue in the media: Why it's important to be media literate

Episode Six:

- Media Literacy Concept: Media messages can be decoded.
- Media usage question: What general tips do you have for other young people about using the media?
- Media Profile: Snapchat; Representation of an issue in the media: The Environment

Through participating in the **Know Your Media** series the young people involved learned how to access, analyse and evaluate the media. They also actively created their own media for broadcast on their local community television station. One of the aims of the project was to pass on production skills to the young people and the staff and volunteers in the Life Centre, so that they would be able to produce further content for Cork Community Television. They gained an understanding about how Community Television works and all of these elements will assist the young people to take more ownership of any future projects they are involved with.



CONCLUSION

Through their core work of supporting communities to produce and broadcast programmes, members of the Community Television Association increase Media Literacy and enable communities to develop the skills and competencies promoted by the BAI's Media Literacy Policy.

Members of the Community Television Association promotes Media Literacy by:

- Producing and broadcasting programmes that specifically and explicitly address Media Literacy.
- Using these programmes as a resource for Media Literacy training.
- Working with communities to produce programmes to be broadcast on Community Television, thereby increasing their understanding of the editorial processes involved in producing different content types (Core Competency 1)
- Involvement in the process of producing television programmes helps participants to understand and assess “the motivations of the content producer and the context in which content is presented.” (Core Competency 1)
- Through their core ethos of working with communities, particularly communities that are traditionally excluded or misrepresented by mainstream media, to produce and broadcast their own programmes Community Television and Community Content Producers promote awareness “of stereotyping, bias, unfair portrayal, non-evidence based speculation, inappropriate content and context across media platforms and services.” (Core Competency 1)

Community Television stations broadcast a wide range of programmes, enabling “access and use of broadcast and digital media content and services in a safe and secure manner.” (Core Competency 2)

- They encourage and support communities to “Create and participate, via media, in a responsible, ethical and effective manner, in the creative, cultural and democratic aspects of society.” (Core Competency 3)
- Through their core work they support communities to
- Construct messages by using text, images, audio and code
- Create media content and products by producing text, images, audio, video and code
- Create content for public use
- Publish, upload, share content online
- Compile and curate content
- Differentiate between and select the most effective services / platforms for public and private communication

- Find and create opportunities to participate in the civic and cultural aspects of society (Core Competency 3)
- Engagement with Community Television and Community Content Producers helps participants and communities to develop a range of skills including those outlined as indicators of success under Core Competency 3
- Level of resilience to negative behaviour and activities via media services, including online
- Levels of self-expression and democratic participation by number of citizens
- Level of creative engagement and output by citizens, across media platforms and services
- Level of cultural engagement and output by citizens, across media platforms and services
- Level of social inclusion, via media platforms and services
- Level of participation in peer-to-peer support
- Level of appropriate challenge to negative behaviour and activities, via media services, including online

Members of the Community Television Association are key players in the promotion of Media Literacy in Ireland. Media Literacy is at the core of the work that they have been doing for decades.

However this work is not adequately supported. Most Community Television companies have no core funding, no staff and are dependent on the time and good will of volunteers. The 2017 Community Television in Ireland report concluded that “the community television sector in the Republic of Ireland is small, reliant on voluntary effort and operating on a shoestring.”¹⁸

Incorporating an ethos of promoting media literacy in the production and broadcasting of programmes is time consuming, far more time consuming than producing traditional media programmes. Actively engaging with communities and providing them with the skills and training needed to be active participants in the production process takes time that is rarely acknowledged or rewarded by funders.

The 2016 BAI Media Literacy policy indicated that funding should be directed to support initiatives that promote media literacy and the core competencies outlined in the policy. There should be an “alignment of some future BAI funded grants, where feasible, to the framework and priority themes” of the Media Literacy policy.

By supporting the work of the members of the Community Television Association, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland would be meeting its own aims of promoting media literacy in Ireland.



Community Television Association



¹⁸ [Community Television in Ireland: An Overview](#) Whitebarn Consulting, December 2017