



## **MILA MISSION AND STRATEGY**

### **June 2023**

This mission and strategy statement was approved by the MILA Board in May 2023. It reflects MILA's initial set of priorities, as well as its longer term aspirations. The statement is likely to evolve and be revised over time to reflect MILA's capabilities and the evolving environment in which it operates.

#### **1. Vision**

A society where people engage critically with information and media, enabling them to lead happier, healthier, safer and more productive lives.

#### **2. Mission**

MILA's mission is to foster collaborations and education that empower everyone in the UK with the lifelong ability to reach and express discerning views about the information and media that they use, share and create.

#### **3. Strategic aims**

- To advance a shared belief that media and information literacy is an essential prerequisite for wellbeing, participation and citizenship in society.
- To promote and champion media and information literacy as a fundamental building block for a healthy, inclusive, democratic society, whilst recognising the close relationship and overlap with other relevant literacies (for instance, news literacy, critical literacy, health literacy, digital literacy).
- To work for a recognition of information and media literacy as a fundamental and integral contributor to lifelong education.
- To address the challenge, identified in the UK Government's Online Media Literacy Strategy, of securing coordination between players in the UK with an interest or involvement in media and information literacy, by:
  - providing an open platform and a collaborative environment where participating organisations, groups, initiatives and individuals may contribute to the common ambition of achieving MILA's vision.
  - fostering a dialogue between different professional communities (academics, practitioners, educators, information providers, policy-makers among others) with a shared interest in media and information literacy.
  - facilitating collaborative research and/or contributing to contribute to research projects with the object of developing the evidence base on media and information literacy.

## 4. Values

- MILA's approach is **inclusive** – it is politically non-partisan and aspires to work in partnership with organisations, groups, initiatives and individuals who share its belief in media and information literacy and who are able to make a positive contribution towards achieving MILA's purpose. It recognises the imperative to work with an inclusive range of players and audiences, to build an alliance that is as representative as possible.
- MILA operates on a shared belief in social **equality**, respectful dialogue and openness to ideas, as well as to the knowledge and insights of its partners. It encourages all players to contribute on equal terms to a common ambition of promoting media and information literacy for everyone.
- MILA is **practical** – its focus is on doing and delivering informed, evidence-based activity that creates real and measurable outcomes for its intended beneficiaries rather than on abstract discussion. MILA's beneficiaries include citizens and the general public; teachers, librarians and educational organisations; groups and initiatives working to promote and enable media and information literacy; and policymakers and other influencers.

## 5. What MILA seeks to achieve

### 5.1. *The problem / challenge*

The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a light on the very human impact of disinformation. In other areas too, such as with climate change and violent extremism, the online spread of conspiracy theories, anti-rational attitudes and paranoia undermines social cohesion and democracy. Media and information literacy is a key part of the fight back against these and other online harms.

But the opportunity is also broader than this. People today are living in a world that is being constantly reshaped by knowledge, data and information. There is a stronger case than ever for equipping everyone in society with the skills, know-how and confidence to discover, use, share and create information in judicious, discerning ways; and to understand where information comes from, how it is mediated and why this is important. In this sense, media and information literacy are essential to having a better understanding of the world, and consequently to empower people to develop informed views and engage fully with society.

Different countries approach this challenge in ways that are conditioned by their respective cultures, policies and practices. In the UK, until recently, public policy paid relatively little attention to media and information literacy. Although the 2021 Online Media Literacy Strategy was an important step in the right direction, there is still no well-funded national effort to address the imperative of achieving MILA's vision. The school curriculum, particularly in England, has never fully integrated media and information literacy in a satisfactory way and, as the Strategy itself points out, there is a lack of coordination between the multitude of civil society and third sector initiatives that develop valuable but usually small-scale tools and methods. There is an urgent need for getting media and information literacy better recognised not just as a means of protecting against harms such as disinformation, but also as a way of empowering people to reach and express informed views and thereby to engage fully with society.

### **5.2. How MILA can help address this**

The problem and challenge cannot possibly be addressed and resolved by any one organisation. MILA addresses its empowering mission by working and partnering with stakeholders in multiple sectors, rather than directly with the general public. Its specificity is that it is an alliance that brings together diverse players - organisations, groups, initiatives and individuals - to capitalise on their expertise and strengthen their collective voice to bring about jointly-derived solutions. MILA is thus an enabler and facilitator, as well as an advocate, deploying its values (see above) to foster projects and initiatives derived from collaborative efforts; to bring about a more holistic and joined-up approach to developing media and information literacy; and to influence policy and practice, drawing from the credibility of pooled expertise.

Many of the activities, outputs, outcomes and impact set out below are aspirational. Some are achievable in the shorter term, but others – especially in terms of outcomes and impact – are likely to take years to implement. MILA thus recognises the importance of prioritisation and planning that reflects practical possibilities and emerging opportunities; it also understands that outcomes and impact need to be measurable.

### **5.3. Inputs**

- Capacity to harness expertise from different players and sectors.
- Core of individuals with shared values and commitment to media and information literacy (trustees, advisors, coordinators).
- Partnerships with relevant academics, policymakers, practitioners, representative organisations.
- Ability to draw from research and evidence in media and information literacy.

### **5.4. Activities**

MILA's activities are structured around three broad strands: advocacy, capacity-building and research.

#### Advocacy

- partnership-building
- public/media engagement
- political engagement and influencing
- contributing to policy development

#### Capacity-building

- building a knowledge hub
- practitioner training, certification and accreditation
- embedding media and information literacy into school and college curricula
- networking

#### Research

- systematic review, bringing the evidence base together
- mapping existing activity

- alignment of existing models and approaches
- participating or facilitating targeted research projects
- developing evaluation and/or impact frameworks for media and information literacy

### Operational

Work under these three thematic strands is largely dependent on MILA developing its operational capability:

- establishing MILA as a legally constituted, independent entity, i.e. a charitable incorporated organisation
- creating and implementing a fundraising and development plan to enable MILA to be a sustainable, self-sufficient organisation with internal capacity and resource

### **5.5. Outputs**

- Recognised, transparent mechanisms and processes for coordination of efforts across multiple domains and between different players for advocacy, capacity-building and research. [operational]
- A framework for a more productive dialogue between media, regulators and policymakers over the legislative basis of information and media use. [advocacy]
- Accreditation framework for recognising MIL skills/competencies for a variety of audiences/users and to inform future policy and practice. [capacity-building]
- A pathway to ‘operationalise’ and evaluate effective interventions to support lifelong learning inasmuch as this relates to MIL. [capacity-building]
- MIL embedded as a specific dimension within policy documents. [advocacy]
- A credible and growing research and evidence base, for instance through a Centre for Media and Information Literacy in partnership with one or more HEIs. [research]
- A partnership with one or more HEIs (notably those with LIS or media studies faculties that have an established research capability), modelled for instance on the [Media Education Lab](#). [research]

### **5.6. Outcomes**

- Quantifiable improvements in the confidence of staff and volunteers in the education and information sectors in their capability to support/enable MIL for their learning communities. [capacity-building]
- Recognisable changes and/or refinements to the school curriculum so that MIL is properly integrated across all or most curriculum subjects and related to associated abilities such as critical thinking. [advocacy, capacity-building]
- Better coordination of efforts across multiple domains to promote MIL. [advocacy]
- Better alignment between different related and overlapping literacies, including MIL, news literacy, digital literacy, critical literacy, etc. [capacity-building, research]
- Capacity to influence the national policy and regulatory agenda in a credible way, channelling the diverse expertise represented within MILA. [advocacy]
- Enhanced awareness of and engagement with MIL as a key aspect of people’s daily lives [capacity-building]

**5.7. *Impact - medium to long term***

- People are empowered to engage critically with information and media, and to harness it to support their own lifelong learning.
- Formal and informal education, for all age groups, is richer, broader and more balanced.
- Information providers are more accountable and provide access to a broader and more balanced range of information resources.
- Democratic institutions are more accountable for their promotion and use of information, and in the ways that they engage with citizens.
- Businesses benefit from a more information/media literate workforce with better analytical competences and the ability to make better use of information.
- People benefit from improved health literacy and are empowered to take more control of their health through a better understanding of health information.

**5.8. *Impact - very long term and societal change***

- People lead healthier, happier and more productive lives through improved ability to navigate and make use of information and media environments.
- People enhance their participation in democratic life and their capacity to hold power to account.
- Greater resilience, future-proofing and effectiveness of the UK's democratic system.
- Strengthening of the economy through enhanced productivity and innovation.
- A more equitable, just, inclusive and representative society.