



Education from the Advertising Industry

Julian Knight MP  
Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Chair  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

22 June 2021

Dear Mr Knight,

I am writing to you on behalf of Media Smart UK, the advertising industry's education programme.

Media Smart is an award-winning not-for-profit organisation, funded by the advertising industry and housed at the Advertising Association. It creates free, PSHE Association accredited media and digital literacy educational materials for schools and youth organisations as well as teachers, parents and carers. These materials enable young people to navigate confidently the media they consume and to identify, interpret and critically evaluate all forms of advertising.

Over the past five years, Media Smart resources have been downloaded across the UK over 63,000 times, and we estimate that it has reached over half a million young people. On average, 325 people visit the Media Smart website every day looking for educational resources. This [showreel](#) provides an overview of Media Smart's impact and supporters.

In light of the Committee's inquiry into influencer culture, I wanted to highlight Media Smart's latest resource on social media influencers that was launched on 7 February. Informed by recent research conducted with young people, this resource was created due to strong interest in learning more about influencers and digital marketing. The module helps young people to understand the commercial link between influencers and the brands they may be promoting, how to recognise branded and paid for content, and how to differentiate between organic and sponsored content.

The training is delivered through a series of informal and informative films made by real influencers. It features popular youth influencers, such as Nayna Florence and Hannah Witton, who feature in [short films](#) to discuss what influencer marketing is, why brands use it and the relevant regulations. Other topics of the short films include how to evaluate critically social media content, how to identify paid for adverts, the use of filters in content and a specific film on Instagram.

The films are supported by teacher guidance and a presentation for use in assemblies or the classroom. Students explore and evaluate the purpose and techniques of influencer marketing, with the aim of building digital and media literacy and emotional resilience. To date, the educational resource has been downloaded 1,720 times, which continues to increase month-on-month, and is estimated to have reached between 100,000-200,000 students. Moreover, since the launch, Facebook ads have reached nearly a quarter of a million people, generated nearly 10,000 webpage views. In September 2021, Media Smart will be adding further resources in this area with educational materials on TikTok co-created with young people themselves.

In addition to this resource, Media Smart also has PSHE Association accredited body image and mental well-being resources for all age groups. The Boys' Biggest Conversation Campaign, for example, aims to encourage young men, across the UK, to talk about the effect body image can have on mental well-being, a concern often raised in conversations around influencer culture. To date, these resources have been downloaded 9,500 times.

It has also received funding from the Government Equalities Office. These materials have seen high demand during the COVID-19 lockdown and are currently being promoted in cinemas.

Media Smart is dedicated to equipping young people with the skills and attributes they need to navigate safely the media and digital literacy to support their well-being and future employability. I would be delighted to brief you and your colleagues further on our work.

Yours sincerely,



Rachel Barber-Mack  
Director, Media Smart

