

# **The Byron Review of the Internet and Video Games**

Submission from the

**Media Literacy Task Force**

November 2007

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### 1. Executive summary:

- It is important to recognise that the concept of ‘media literacy’ is about having a confident and critical understanding of media and an ability to use it creatively, which includes but goes well beyond technical proficiency
- In a media literate society adults, young people and children are informed and empowered in relation to media in the contemporary world
- This empowerment fosters a use of media which develops the capability to protect oneself and others from harm – as well as to enjoy new technologies and benefit from them for learning, personal development and entrepreneurial activity
- Advancing media literacy is thus a collaborative responsibility of government, the media industries, educators and cultural agencies, as well as citizens themselves

### 2. About the Media Literacy Task Force and the Charter for Media Literacy:

The Media Literacy Task Force was set up in 2004 with the support of the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in 2004. It is currently chaired by Heather Rabbatts, CBE. It comprises senior representatives of the BBC, the British Board of Film Classification, the British Film Institute, Channel Four, ITV, the Media Education Association, Skillset and the UK Film Council. DCMS, Ofcom, the Broadband Stakeholder Group and Andrea Millwood-Hargrave sit as observers.

In November 2005, James Purnell MP (then Minister for Creative Industries and Tourism) together with a number of leading figures from the Nations and Regions in education, the film, television and media industries, launched a Charter for Media Literacy. The Charter explains what being media literate today means as well as priorities for developing this, particularly in relation to moving image media and content. The text of the Charter was widely consulted upon, both within the UK and Europe, and many individuals and agencies in education, cultural organisations, the media and communications

industries have since pledged their support (for the full text of the Charter, its context, and a list of current signatories see [www.medialiteracy.org.uk](http://www.medialiteracy.org.uk)). The Charter is also championed across Europe by a further group and has signatories from at least 19 other countries (see [www.euromedialiteracy.eu](http://www.euromedialiteracy.eu) for information).

Details of the launch event, and other related documents, are available to download at:

<http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/information/downloads/?subject=20>

The Task Force:

- Sees ‘media literacy’ as part of a wider definition of ‘literacy’ in the C21st and not as a separate set of skills or competencies
- Is committed to ensuring a combination of creative, cultural and critical competencies (the Charter’s 3 C’s) for all users in relation to their full and productive use of media
- Believes these competencies and skills should be an entitlement, not a privilege, and available to all throughout their lives
- Aims to encourage full, purposeful and creative use of the internet and media, including the confidence and competence to respond or question, complain about or object to, content or services on behalf of themselves, their families or communities – whether geographic, cultural or related to disability, age, gender or sexuality
- Believes that collaboration between government, educators, the media and communication industries and cultural agencies is the best route to developing media literacy effectively with parents, children and others

### 3. Key issues

The Media Literacy Task Force recognises the complexity of the issues involved and the problems in striking the appropriate balance between the rights and responsibilities of individuals. It also recognises that Government and regulators have a role to play, not just through legislation or direct regulation, but by encouraging enlightened and responsible behaviour by

stakeholders. The Task Force also believes that there are some basic key issues that the Review needs to consider.

These issues, in the view of the Task Force, underpin approaches to answering the specific questions asked by the Review:

To what extent do children, young people and parents understand and manage those risks and how can they be supported to do so?

What, if anything, could be changed in order to help children, young people and parents manage the potential or actual risks?

- It is important to recognise that ‘media literacy’ is about the confident, critical understanding of media, its cultural context, and the creative use of it as well as technical proficiency
- Developing this critical confidence and understanding is one of the best ways of ensuring protection from harm
- Media literacy is also concerned with ensuring equality of access and advancing diversity
- Media literacy should be seen as an entitlement that is relevant right across the curriculum in schools – not just as a separate subject or activity. Media literacy, therefore, needs to be an integral part of all teachers’ training and continuing professional development
- Key media sectors should be encouraged to collaborate via their trade and professional bodies, or in other ways, in order to deliver media literacy outcomes
- Annual reporting on progress, and possibly Action Plans, should be encouraged within each media industry and cultural sector groupings to strengthen commitment to media literacy work. This model has worked well, for example, in the Employers’ Forum on Disability

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November 2007