Connected: Module 2: News, Information & Problems of False Information Powerpoint Presentation Script

Slide 1
Notes: This module examines the responsible and ethical use of media and explores different types of misinformation. It aims to develop the critical thinking skills necessary to enable students to distinguish between false information and accurate and reliable information. Students will explore how to evaluate information online and recognise bias and prejudice online.

This presentation is designed to be an additional support to teachers teaching Module 2 of the Connected programme as it contains the key learning and discussion points from each lesson.

Activity 1: What is False Information?
Slide 2
Notes: From accessing information for homework and study, to connecting with friends, or staying up-to-date on any number of topics, content is sourced online on a daily basis. With so much content available to us, it is important to be able to judge how accurate and reliable our information is. This means asking questions about where our information comes from, who produced it and why, evaluating the impact it may have, and determining to what extent it can be trusted.

False information can spread rapidly on social media, online platforms or in messaging apps, often taking advantage of times of uncertainty. An obvious example of this is the increase in the volume of false or misinformation encountered by most people during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Slide 3
Notes: When introducing the topic; students may be more familiar with the term 'fake news'. If possible, it is advised to avoid the term 'fake news', or at least limit its use as the term 'fake news' is closely associated with politics, and this association can unhelpfully narrow the focus of the issue.

The term 'false information' is preferable as it can refer to a diverse range of disinformation and misinformation covering topics such as health, environmental and economics across all platforms and genres, while 'fake news' is more narrowly understood as political news stories.

Slide 4
Notes: Explain to students; false information refers to information, stories or hoaxes created to deliberately misinform or deceive readers, viewers or listeners. The story itself might be fabricated, with no verifiable facts, sources or quotes or some elements or facts might be accurate but presented in a false or misleading way. Explain to students the term 'fake news' is now closely associated with politics, and this association can unhelpfully narrow the focus of the issue. The term 'false information' is preferable as it can refer to a diverse range of disinformation covering topics such as health, environmental and economics across all platforms and genres, while 'fake news' is more narrowly understood as political news stories.

Reinforce to students that false information can originate from many sources, but can also come to us in many different ways, including from sources we trust: many people have seen false information shared online by friends and family, and sometimes legitimate news sources fail to double-check facts or make honest mistakes.

Slide 5
Notes: With so much information at our fingertips it can be easy to come across something online that isn't quite as accurate or reliable as it should be.
This kind of information is often called Fake News but a better description might be false information because it affects more than news stories.

Let's watch this explainer video on what is false information to learn more. **Click the link to play video: https://vimeo.com/383270456**

Running time is 4:22.

Slide 6
Notes: The following questions on this slide are the questions outlined in Worksheet 2.1: What is False Information? Ask students if to discuss in groups the following questions.

Suggested responses to Worksheet 2.1:
1. Information, stories or hoaxes created to deliberately misinform or deceive readers, viewers, or listeners. The story itself might be fabricated, with no verifiable facts, sources or quotes or some elements or facts might be accurate but presented in a false or misleading way.

2. False information can originate from many sources, but can also come to us in many different ways, including from sources we trust: many people have seen false information shared online by friends and family, and sometimes legitimate news sources fail to double-check facts or make honest mistakes.

3. People can spread false information without thinking or checking the full story. Often, False information is designed to evoke an immediate emotive response for example anger. People are likely to spread false information that matches or reflects their own views. **Bots** (fake accounts programmed to spread a story to as many people as possible) can also spread false information.

4. Check the course, look beyond the headline, check other sources, check you biases, use a fact checking site.

5. False information can have many real world impacts including; effects include political influence, increasing group polarisation, reducing trust, and generally undermining civil society.

Activity 2: Checking the Story
Slide 7
Notes: Explain to students that because today we often get our information from many different sources, what's often most important is getting more context about a story. Inform students that they will be looking at how to distinguish from false information stories. Encourage your students to use the 5 W's (who, what, when, where, why) and a How to identify false information online.

Slide 8
Notes: Distribute and read through worksheet 2.2; How to spot false information online. There are a number of things to watch out for when evaluating content online.

1. Check the source
Check the source of the story, do you recognise the website? Is it a credible or reliable source? If you are unfamiliar with the site, look in the about section or find out more information about the author, date, time, URL.

2. Look beyond the headline
Check the entire article. To grab attention, false information often uses sensationalist or shocking clickbait headlines – sometimes all caps and using exclamation points. False information can also contain incorrect dates or altered timelines. It is also a good idea to check when the article was published, is it current or an old news story? It's also a good idea to see if the information is attributed to an author, or if quotes are attributed to real people or unnamed sources.

Slide 9
Notes: 3. Check other sources
Probably the most reliable way to 'fact-check' information is to cross-reference it with other sources. Ask yourself whether other reputable news or media outlets are reporting on the story. Check whether there are any sources in the story. If so, check that they are reliable or if they even exist! Try to find the earliest and most local source for the story.

4. Is it fact or opinion?
The language used in the piece might help you identify whether something is written as fact (something that is proven to be true) or opinion (someone's personal belief). For example factual statements might include words such as "The annual report confirms… Scientists have recently discovered… According to the results of the tests… The investigation demonstrated…" Whereas opinion pieces might use statements such as "He claimed that… It is the officer's view that… Many scientists suspect that… I believe…" or could pose questions such as "Could this really be possible …?". Remember, you are entitled to your own opinion but not your own facts.

Slide 10

Notes: 5. Check your biases

Are your own views or beliefs affecting your judgement of a news feature or report? We are even more likely to accept or ignore things depending on whether or not they support what we already believe.

6. Is it a joke?

Satirical sites like Waterford Whispers are popular online and sometimes it is not always clear whether a story is just a joke or parody… Check the website, is it known for satire or creating funny stories or is the social media account marked as a 'parody' account?

7. Check a fact-checking site

Sites like Snopes: www.snopes.com; PolitiFact: politifact.com; Fact Check: factcheck.org can be a great shortcut to find out if a story has already been debunked – or if a too-good-to-be true story really was true after all.

For pictures, you can do a reverse search for images at TinEye (www.tineye.com) or Google Reverse Image Search (www.images.google.com). This will tell you where else the picture has appeared, and also show you similar pictures (which is a good way to find out if it has been photoshopped).

Then before you believe it or share it: Check your own instincts – does it seem likely to be true, is it accurate and helpful, is it fair to share?

Activity 3: Images, Deepfaske and Visual Deception
Slide 11

Notes: Ask students if they or someone they know have ever fallen for or shared a false or inaccurate image or video of some kind? Ask students what does it matter if we can't tell real or reliable from false or misleading information online? Elicit responses.

Remind them that viral images or videos that are misleading or not real are just as harmful as articles containing false information – think about when a natural disaster or terrorist attack happens, social media is flooded with footage apparently showing the scene on the ground. Or the influence of these images on how people think or what they believe. An image says a thousand words so it is important that students can identify images or videos which are false.

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Notes: Play the two deepfake videos of Tom Cruise for students and ask them can they guess which video features the real Tom Cruise?

Videos available here:

- https://www.tiktok.com/@deeptomcruise/video/6933305746130046214?lang=en&is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1
- https://www.tiktok.com/@deeptomcruise/video/6932166297996233989?lang=en&is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1

The answer is neither of them are. They are both deepfake videos of Tom Cruise.

Ask students if they have ever heard of the term deepfakes before or if they have seen any similar doctored videos? Elicit responses.

We are now going to look at images, deepfakes and visual deception online and consider the potential consequences if an image or video is doctored so well that it can be hard to tell if it is authentic.

Slide 13
Notes: Distribute and read through worksheet 2.3: Deepfakes Explained. Explain to students what deepfakes are.

Deepfakes are fake videos created using digital software, machine learning and face swapping.

Deepfakes are computer-created artificial videos in which images are combined to create new footage that depicts events, statements or action that never actually happened.

Emphasise to students that the results can be quite convincing. Deep fakes differ from other forms of false information by being very difficult to identify as false.

Slide 14
Notes: How does it work?
The basic concept behind the technology is facial recognition, users of Snapchat will be familiar with the face swap or filters functions which apply transformations or augment your facial features. Deep Fakes are similar but much more realistic.

Fake videos can be created using a machine learning technique called a "generative adversarial network" or GAN. For example a GAN can look at thousands of photos of Beyonce and produce a new image that approximates those photos without being an exact copy of any one of the photos. GAN can be used to generate new audio from existing audio, or new text from existing text – it is a multiuse technology. The technology used to create deepfakes is programmed to map faces according to "landmark" points. These are features like the corners of your eyes and mouth, your nostrils, and the contour of your jawline.

Slide 15
Notes: Next, ask students to consider the potential consequences if an image or video is doctored or altered so well that it can be hard to tell if it is authentic.

While the technology used to create deep fakes is relatively new technology, it is advancing quickly and it is becoming more and more difficult to check if a video is real or not. Developments in these kinds of technologies have obvious social, moral and political implications. There are already issues around news sources and credibility of stories online, deep fakes have the potential to exacerbate the problem of false information online or disrupt and undermine the credibility of and trust in news, and information in general.

The real potential danger of false information and deepfake technology is creating mistrust or apathy in people about what we see or hear online. If everything could be fake does that

mean that nothing is real anymore? For as long as we have had photographs and video and audio footage they have helped learn about our past, and shaped how we see and know things. Some people already question the facts around events that unquestionably happened, like the Holocaust, the moon landing and 9/11, despite video proof. If deepfakes make people believe they can't trust video, the problems of false information and conspiracy theories could get worse.

Slide 16
Notes: Like all types of information we encounter online the most important thing we can do when deciding if videos or images online are authentic and real is to be critical.
We need to use critical thinking and ask ourselves key questions such as:
> — Who and why is someone sharing this video?
> — Who or what is the original source?
> — Is the person in the video saying something you'd never expect them to say?
> — Does the video advance someone else's agenda? Who benefits from this video?

Activity 4: Social Media and Influencers
Slide 17
Notes: Social media sites can play a big part in increasing the reach of false information. In this lesson activity we are going to look at the role of social media and influencers in the spread of false information.

Slide 18
Notes: Ask students, where do they mostly get their news from every day? Elicit responses.

Ask if they think a lot of people now rely on getting the news from social media sites and what is the big difference between the news that comes from social media and news from traditional outlets such as on the television, radio or newspapers? Elicit responses.

Remind students, the internet has enabled a whole new way to publish, share and consume information and news with very little regulation or editorial standards.
Many people now get news from social media sites and networks and often it can be difficult to tell whether stories are credible or not. Information overload and a general lack of understanding about how the internet works by people has also contributed to an increase in fake news or hoax stories. Social media sites can play a big part in increasing the reach of these types of stories. In this lesson activity we are going to look at the role of social media and influencers in the spread of false information.

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The economics of social media favour gossip, novelty, speed and "shareability", Simeon

Yates, Professor of Digital Culture at the University of Liverpool.

Slide 20
Notes: After students have shared their responses from worksheet 2.4: Conversation starters, ask students to share their ideas about influence and false information. Some discussion questions may include:

— What do we mean by 'an influencer'?
— How do you usually find or follow influencers and why?
— How might people quietly or anonymously be influencers or connect people to support or shape new ideas?
— If someone is anonymous can they still be a good influencer? How?
— Why might people want to be loud, visible or popular when they promote ideas, products, attitudes or practices on social media?
— How does someone's personality influence how they influence or lead others?
— Are influencers reliable sources of information? Why? Why not?
— Can you think of any examples where an influencer shared false information either knowing or unknowingly?

Some students will focus on influencers as types of social media micro-celebrities who share ideas or promote products. Other examples include entrepreneurs, beauty, travel or fitness bloggers, models, musicians, noting that the popularity of different social media influences can change rapidly.

Slide 21
Notes: Next play the Full Picture video for students, available here:
https://www.webwise.ie/thefullpicture

The Full Picture is a short film exploring how young people use social media to connect and share. The film highlights the influences and pressures young people face online and encourages them to see the full picture. Social media helps us share our lives but it does not tell the whole story.

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Notes: The Full Picture ends with the lines:
See the full picture.
Not everything we see online tells the whole story.
What is your understanding of these lines after watching the video?

Get feedback from students on this.

Alternatively, use a real time feedback platform such as Mentimeter (www.mentimeter.com) or Kahoot (www.kahoot.it) to get instant feedback on this.

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Notes: Explain to students that social media is a great way to explore content we are interested in and to discover new people, but it is important to view what we see in our newsfeeds with a critical eye.Social media content can be unrealistic for lots of reasons – images may have been edited; the text has been carefully chosen, etc. **The danger is that**

viewing content without a critical eye, can leading to having a one dimensional perspective through finding yourself in a filter bubble, can mean that you are not in the best position you could be in to make an informed decision about information, and can even lead to self-esteem issues, and pressure to conform in ways that may not be a good fit for you as a person.

The rise of influencers and influencer marketing is a good example of why this is important to develop the skills to question what we see in our newsfeeds.

We follow influencers because we are interested in their content, we want to be entertained, we want to learn from them or even are inspired by them.
But it can lead to pressure about what clothes to wear, how to look, and what music, food or brands to buy. So, it's important to consider The Full Picture, and think critically about what you are seeing.
- What was the motivation behind the post -
- Has that person been paid to promote an item?
- How has it been edited?
- Has what they are posting been designed to fit their online 'brand'?
- Is it a realistic reflection of who they are?
Elicit responses from students on this.

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Notes: Finally, conclude by reminding students to be aware of the False Information Business Model. **The internet and social media have made it very easy for anyone to publish content on a website, blog or social media profile and potentially reach large audiences.** With so many people now getting news from social media sites, many content creators or publishers have used this to their advantage.

False information can be a profitable business, generating large sums of advertising revenue for publishers who create and publish stories that go viral. The more clicks a story gets, the more money online publishers make through advertising revenue and **for many publishers social media is an ideal platform to share content and drive web traffic.** This is something we will continue to look at in the next lesson activity, Lesson Activity 5: Bursting Your Filter Bubble.

Activity 5: Bursting Your Filter Bubble
Slide 25
Notes: This lesson activity will help students become aware of their own filter bubble and how to get outside of it.

Slide 26
Notes: Ask students if they have noticed that when they go online or login to social media they are presented with content, news, articles or ads that somehow know the things that they are interested in? Ask students why they think this is? Elicit Responses.

Test this by demonstrating the concept of the filter bubble in real time and searching online for something e.g., a country Egypt and look at their own search results, noting if there is anything different than what appears on the whiteboard. Did their search results differ at all

from what appears on the whiteboard. If so, ask why they think this is?

Slide 27
Notes: After taking feedback from students, explain that what we encounter when we go online doesn't appear by coincidence – the content that appears on our online newsfeeds **is determined by the algorithm of the particular platform we are using**. When we go online or login to a social network we are generally presented with news, articles and content based on our own searches online. This is because platforms such as Google and Facebook use algorithms to personalise and tailor their services to each user, meaning different users will see different content. This type of content tends to reflect our own likes, views and beliefs and therefore isolates us from differing views and opinions. This is often referred to as a filter bubble.

Slide 28
Notes: Click to watch this short explainer video on filter bubbles: How filter bubbles isolate you, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pT-k1kDIRnw

Slide 29
Notes: Let's consider what are the benefits and drawbacks to getting information online through a filter bubble?
Sample answers include:
Benefits:
 — Search engines can give us more relevant results that we want faster.
 — Websites, apps, search engines show us content we've already shown an interest in.
 — Websites that we commonly go to are easier to find, as they appear higher up in search lists.
 — Location tracking helps us search our area for relevant shops, restaurants etc.
 — We can save our login details on our devices so we don't have to keep retyping them.
Drawbacks:
 — If search results are skewed and we are unaware of it, this affects our ability to access, evaluate, and use information. We need to know if search results are biased in order to be critical in our selection of information.
 — Make you less open-minded and able to see things from someone else's point of view.

Explain to students that sometimes the filters we use to manage the vast amount of information available online has become like a bubble around us where we mainly just get opinions we already agree with and we have to learn how to burst that bubble.

Slide 30
Notes: Explain to students that sometimes the filters we use to manage the vast amount of information available online has become like a bubble around us where we mainly just get opinions we already agree with and we have to learn how to burst that bubble.

Ask students to consider what search engine, apps, social media platforms, etc they use to find out information about the world, your interests and your homework or research – these

are sources you trust and use on a daily basis. Students are to list their trusted sources they use on a daily basis inside their filter bubble.

Next, ask students if they wanted to break out of your filter bubble, how might you do it? What people and organisations might you follow? What new perspectives might you seek out? How could you find them?
Suggestions include:
> — Try doing a search with a search engine that you don't usually use e.g. DuckDuckGo, sweetsearch,
> — Turn off targeted ads,
> — Regularly delete your browser history,
> — Follow trusted news sources, journalists, experts
> — Swap one of your trusted sources for one you rarely use, maybe even just for a short period of time.

Finally, remind students that the most important thing you can do is make sure that you're not only getting news that confirms what you already believe. At the same time it's important not to "overcorrect" and seek out sources that have a totally opposite bias from yours, which will almost certainly make you angry and reinforce your current opinions. Instead, find sources from a moderately different point of view.

Slide 31
Notes: **What can you do?**
The content we encounter online can influence how we feel, the choices we make, the perspective we have, and even how long we spend using technology and the internet - it is important that we can recognise this

Taking on board critical thinking skills will help you have more control and understanding - and be able to navigate issues around false information, manipulation or unwittingly having a narrow perspective

Use these simple tips to help you improve your perspective and broaden the variety of content you get and if time allows ask students to create a list of their own tips

- Think critically about the content you see online.
- Keep an open mind: Be aware that what you see online has been tailored to your preferences, and online algorithms filter what content you see, *and* what you don't see, in order to try to hold your interest. If a piece of content is being highlighted by an online platform, why might that be? Is it because you are likely to be interested in it?
- Search for new perspectives: It can be a good idea to look for a new perspective or opinion on topics that you are interested in, that way you will start to see different points of view to what you are used to.
- Vary your sources of information: Find new trusted sources of news and information.
- Seek out the positive: If you feel like a topic is bothering you, unfollow or hide it and find positive, healthier content to have in your newsfeed.
- Refresh your settings: Regularly clear your browsing settings and consider turning off targeted ads. Find out how here.

*Safer Internet Day Poster Extension Activity
If time allows, ask students to create a poster for Safer Internet Day of their own tips for how they can broaden their perspective online.

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Notes: A really helpful resource in Ireland has been the Be Media Smart campaign.
It is a campaign that has been developed by a network called Media Literacy Ireland - it is a member network that is dedicated to promoting media literacy. Webwise are very proud to be a member, alongside other organisations such as national broadcasters, local and regional radio stations, library services, academics, youth organisations, and other leading organisations in Ireland - and social media companies as well such as Facebook and Twitter.

The BeMediaSmart campaign - the aim is to encourage people to STOP THINK CHECK that the information they are consuming, what they are reading, seeing or hearing is accurate and reliable.

The focal point or main platform is the BeMediaSmart (www.bemediasmart.ie) website where you can find lots of really helpful information, debunked misinformation stories, useful fact-checking links, as well as tips and resources which can be used by teachers to incorporate media literacy education into the classroom.

You will see some of the tips onscreen - Read more than the headline, Don't assume that a picture is giving you the whole story, Just because information goes viral or is trending, doesn't mean it is accurate. There are lots more helpful tips available on the site to help people be able to judge how accurate and reliable their information is, and to be able to make an informed decision.

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Notes: Carl Miller is a UK author and social media analyst, who we mentioned contributed to our Connected resource, and scripted the Explained: What is Big Data? video.
He has suggested 7 rules to resist online manipulation - it is really useful advice for all of us to take onboard when it comes to digital media literacy, and having those critical thinking skills to guard against the problems of false information, or understanding how online algorithms can influence what you see on your newsfeed.

1. Activating outrage is the easiest way to manipulate you. It is present in literally every info warfare campaign I've ever analysed. When you become angry, you make others angry as well - both your friends and opponents. Guard against it.
2. Sitting there scrolling through your feed makes you prey to all the gaming and manipulation that targets algorithmic curation. This is one of the ways that illicit/manipulative content makes itself extremely visible.
3. The information that wants to find you isn't the information you want to find. Instead, reach out, actively find good sources. Proactively learn about the world using your own, conscious sense of what to trust.
4. Manipulation very commonly activates your emotion, not reasoning. The hope (I've heard from viral crafters) is to get you to share stuff literally before you've thought

about it. Always pause before sharing. Consider it as well as feel it.

5. Even Jack Dorsey says not to trust Twitter followers. All those easily visible, countable metrics have been taken to be a proxy for authority, and they really, really shouldn't be. They're unbelievably easy to manipulate, across SM.

6. For really really key stuff, don't trust the Internet I'm afraid. Speak to actual people too.

7. Your attention changes you. Where you spend it is a proactive choice that changes who you are, what you think, whom you know. Spending attention should be made with the same discernment and care as, say, deciding what food to put into our bodies.