



Women and Equalities Committee

Oral evidence: [Changing the perfect picture: an inquiry into body image](#), HC 274

Wednesday 21 October 2020

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 21 October 2020.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Caroline Nokes (Chair); Sara Britcliffe; Theo Clarke; Elliot Colburn; Angela Crawley; Alex Davies-Jones; Peter Gibson, Kim Johnson; Kate Osborne.

Questions 47–72

Witnesses

I: Danny Bowman; Tatyana; Kate Roberts; Cassianne.

II: Dr Marc Bush, Associate Director, YoungMinds; Catherine Deakin, Director of Communications and Fundraising, Changing Faces; Dr Antonis Kousoulis, Director for England and Wales, Mental Health Foundation; Zoe Palmer, External Affairs Manager, Girlguiding UK.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Changing Faces](#)
- [Girlguiding UK](#)
- [YoungMinds](#)



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Danny Bowman, Tatyana, Kate Roberts and Cassianne.

Q47 **Chair:** Good afternoon and welcome to our evidence session for the Women and Equalities Committee inquiry into body image. This is the second evidence session and I would like to thank our panellists for being part of this afternoon's meeting.

I am going to kick off straight away with a question. In a couple of minutes, please, so it does not have to be too long an answer, could you talk to us about your experience with your own body image and anything that makes you feel unhappy about your appearance?

Cassianne: I am Cassianne and I am 19. I have faced issues with anorexia in the past when I have just not felt good about my body and felt like I needed to fix that in some way. I have also struggled with things about my race and the value of that, as well as quite specific things like hair texture or styles.

Danny Bowman: Thank you for letting me be here. My body image difficulties started when I was in my early teens with a want to fit in. I started to develop a negative body image through scrolling through images on social media platforms. Unfortunately, that had a really detrimental effect on the way I saw my body image. From that, I started to scrutinise the way I looked. I unfortunately reached a low point, a critical crisis, and developed body dysmorphic disorder, which is a mental health problem.

Kate Roberts: I am Kate and I am 20. My issues with body image mainly come from bullying that I experienced in both secondary and primary school. For me, this started around the age of seven in primary school. It was mainly being told I was fat and things. That caused a lot of issues with my weight and I did not understand what a healthy weight was.

It was idealised in school to be a smaller size than was appropriate to your age. For example, the girls would say that to fit into clothes for a six-year-old would be the idealised thing if you were eight, so it was two years younger than you should have been. I do not know where this came from, but this was the ideal to reach in school. It really caused a lot of issues for me. Puberty was another big issue as I started puberty a lot earlier than most girls and it was quite noticeable.

Chair: Your experience really started very young.

Kate Roberts: Yes.

Tatyana: I am Tatyana. My issues with body image started when I was eight years old and I got burned by fire. From then on, I knew that I was different, but I did not really understand the extent until I went back to school and people who were my friends started to say things about my



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scars. Social media heavily came into play because I felt like I was never good enough or I would never look like those girls. I entered high school and everything started to spiral downhill until I changed my thinking.

Chair: Thank you for that introduction.

Q48 **Elliot Colburn:** Thank you again to all our witnesses for coming and speaking to us this afternoon. Kate, perhaps I could pick up on what you were saying about how it began for you in school. A lot of it was with the contribution of bullying. Could you tell me a little more about what you think influences young people's perception of their body image? Are we talking just about school or are we talking about social media as well? Could you expand a little more on what you think the influences are?

Kate Roberts: School and other people are influences for many, potentially also if those people are struggling with their own body image but are trying to hide it. For those people, it often comes from things they see in the media: mainly adverts, and nowadays influencers and reality TV. They help to set, but also reinforce, this idea of a certain standard and type of body image. They pass it on to younger people, who then pass it on to other younger people they see who do not fit that image.

Q49 **Elliot Colburn:** Did any of the other panellists want to add anything to what Kate said about what might influence a young person's perception of their body image?

Danny Bowman: Social media plays a massive role, specifically face editing and body image editing apps. They give a perception to young people of an idealised body type that is not necessarily real. Unfortunately, because social media has become central to all of our realities, especially young people, they are looking at these body images just like I did, and saying, "Why do I not look like that? Why am I not reaching the success that these people are achieving?"

That is really problematic because it pushes young people to having a level of negative body image, but also questioning their own body image in a really negative way. Not all the time, but it can lead to really negative consequences, specifically mental health problems and body image difficulties.

Elliot Colburn: Tatyana and Cassianne, I can see you nodding along there.

Q50 **Chair:** Danny, you just said something really interesting about appearance and linking that to success. Do you feel very strongly that having an idealised image conveys an attitude of success to a person?

Danny Bowman: Absolutely. Specifically right now, we are seeing influencers on social media who are perceived as extremely successful, but are also putting forward a certain body image. From my own experience of looking at that, I thought, "If I cannot reach that level of



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success with my body image, I will be a failure. I will not succeed in life". Unfortunately, a lot of young people judge success on things like body image while seeing these influencers on social media.

Q51 Peter Gibson: Danny, you raised an important point about visibility on social media. I would be interested to know what the witnesses would say if social media companies and the press were compelled to mark photographs to indicate that they had been altered or filtered from the norm.

Danny Bowman: It is a moral responsibility of social media companies to label these images to bring back a sense of reality on social media. Unfortunately, we have a system at the moment where a lot of different body images have been put on social media and a lot of them have been heavily edited. Young people looking at that have no idea that that image has been edited, especially as 13 and 14-year-olds. They may not understand it as well as someone who is slightly older. Unfortunately, in some really tragic cases, that leads to people like me when I was younger developing body image difficulties. It is morally imperative that social media companies take responsibility and actually label these photos. That would be a really positive step forward.

Cassianne: I agree. Social media should maybe make it known, but, if younger people decide to edit their photos, it is also looked down upon in society. If we know that someone is editing their picture, they also get a backlash for editing it. If standard people going to school were editing their pictures, and social media was showing that to everyone else, it could create a different effect. Of course, they should be doing something, but maybe marking it for everyone to see is not the best.

Kate Roberts: It would be good for them to come with some sort of note or something. Like Danny said, when you are younger, you think that this is what people really look like; this is perfection and this is what you have to reach for. It would also make them feel more comfortable in themselves and more accepted because it feels like you will not be accepted if you do not look a certain way. If they changed the adverts, it would show acceptance for different types of people. That would help individuals.

Tatyana: I agree with Cassianne to the extent that it is up to social media companies, but also the influencers themselves, to acknowledge: "Yes, I have edited my pictures. It is okay that you do not look like this and I do not look like this". Influencers have more of a role to play than the actual company and the app.

Q52 Chair: Do you think there is a different pressure on boys as opposed to girls? Do you think it is worse for boys or for girls? Would you like to expand on anything around that?

Danny Bowman: Absolutely. There is more awareness of the body image pressures among boys now. The pressures that women were



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facing 10, 11 or 12 years ago are now being projected on males, whether you have to have a six-pack or perfect skin. When I was experiencing a body image issue, one of the hardest things was, being a male, opening up about it. No one really understood. It was a female problem; it was not a male problem. It was not something I should care about. I really questioned my masculinity.

Now, moving forward five, six or seven years, there is immense pressure on males to look a certain way. I would not say it was more or less than females; it has just caught up with the pressures that a lot of females unfortunately experienced 10 years ago and are sadly still experiencing now.

Kate Roberts: I do not know if it is pressure, but there is more focus on what women wear, particularly famous women and women in positions of power. That often takes away from what they are actually doing. They always comment on the thing and then they say “and she was wearing”, when it does not really have a place. Otherwise, the pressure is just different. For example, I mentioned issues with puberty, and it was mainly to do with body hair: girls should not really have any body hair on their legs, their face or anything, but boys should have it. The pressure is just in a different way.

Tatyana: I agree with Danny in the sense that it is more known for males to open up about their body issues. It has been happening, but because of how we perceive males they were afraid to speak up. Now we are in a time where guys are not afraid to speak up any more, and have the chance to really discuss and be heard, and for someone to understand their body image issues.

Cassianne: I agree that there is a lot of pressure on boys. I know that, a lot of the time, boys do not feel like they can speak up, or they do not feel like they have the right to feel the way that they do. I also think that there is a lot of pressure to feel masculine. Like Danny said, he did not want to open up about it and stuff like that, because of how he felt. Yes, I agree.

Q53 **Kim Johnson:** Good afternoon, panel. I am very pleased that you are here sharing your personal experiences with us this afternoon. My question is for Tatyana, but please feel free to chip in, Cassianne. Speaking from both your personal and campaigning experience, do young black people face specific challenges around body image? What would promote a positive body image for young black people?

Tatyana: I do. As a young black female, a lot of women you see in music videos are very curvaceous and have a certain body shape. I do not have that. Growing up, it was really hard because I felt like I needed to do certain exercises to look the way that I was supposed to look. There just need to be more advertisements and more things done to show that there are different body types, especially in the black community, and it



is okay to have different body types. At the end of the day, we are all the same.

Cassianne: I feel the same way. I had the same issue, and then I got to a point where I was overeating as well. That also had a negative impact on me. I did not see enough representation of different types of bodies, skin tones, skin types, hair textures and things like that, which are not really represented in everyday things like movies and adverts.

Q54 **Kim Johnson:** How do you think that positive body image for young black people can be promoted more positively?

Cassianne: It just needs to be represented more. Have more adverts with black women in them of different body types and things like that, so that young children on social media and elsewhere can see those things and see that they are being represented in media. They can see that it is okay to look different, or to have whatever skin type or body type.

Q55 **Kim Johnson:** Kate mentioned influencers having some responsibility. Do you agree with what Kate was saying about influencers promoting those positive images more clearly?

Cassianne: Yes, and it is important for the influencers to be honest. Social media just gives us the platform and it is up to us to use it. If influencers are going to be on social media, they should use it for honest things and to promote positivity.

Q56 **Angela Crawley:** Thank you to each of you. It is incredibly brave to come before a Committee. I can imagine it is quite daunting, so well done to each of you for articulating very well and passionately how this has impacted you.

How do you feel the internet has impacted on your life, perhaps looking back from when you were younger and as you have got older? You mentioned that gendered lens, Danny, that you feel is perhaps starting to catch up now. Do you feel that more could be done to support young people like you on the internet other than, for example, the labelling that has been suggested?

Danny Bowman: Absolutely. In my case, it had a major impact on my life. I went from a really happy young man who played rugby and enjoyed myself to someone who was six months housebound and unfortunately spending every hour of the day trying to perfect my appearance. It was quite extreme for me.

On the trajectory of where we have gone, it was not as intense back then as it is now. That is why there is so much urgency. There should be so much urgency now because the technological advances that have come forward on things like social media allow people to edit their appearance a lot more and put forward a much more edited version of themselves on social media platforms that is undoubtedly only going to have a negative impact on young people's mental health and body image. This is where



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we can take some steps beyond labelling photos, such as age restrictions to protect the youngest within our society on certain apps and making sure that social media companies are implementing those age restrictions on their apps.

On a higher level, social media companies need to perfect some of the imperfections on their apps such as negative imagery. They need to get better at removing negative imagery that can be triggering for people with anorexia or people who have experienced trauma in relation to their body image. All of these different steps can act as a catalyst to making social media a safer place for everyone.

I do not want to hit on social media too much. It is everyone's responsibility to make sure that they are putting forward an image of themselves on social media that is as real as possible. It is a mix. Social media companies, apps and individuals can lead the change on this.

Angela Crawley: Thank you, Danny. You have given really mature, sensible, pragmatic suggestions to the Committee.

Q57 **Kate Osborne:** Thank you so much for coming to our Committee today and sharing your very personal experiences with us. What has helped you improve your body image? Do you think young people struggling with their body image know where to go to access support?

Cassianne: It was a hard journey because you have to do it by yourself. I just had to start accepting things and realising that I cannot really change them. I had to then go out of my way to find the representation that I wanted. Obviously, I could not find what I was looking for through just watching movies. I could not find good representations of myself, so I had to go out of my way and watch YouTube videos made by black creators talking about their hair or something like that.

I had to go the extra mile. I just recognised it as a problem and knew that I had to change something about it. I could not go my whole life being like that, so I had to go the extra mile. That is something that people should not have to go the extra mile for. It should be represented and they should be able to do it from everyday life.

For support, sometimes people do not know that they are experiencing body image issues because it comes in so many different ways. Sometimes it can be small; sometimes it can be big. Sometimes people do not really know that they have an issue to get support. When people do know, it might be a mixture. I do not think a lot of people would know. If you were to do research on it, I think you would find it.

Kate Roberts: It just took time really, like Cassianne said, and seeing different examples. For me, it was from other people and doing extracurricular things outside school like Girlguiding. I have also always been in orchestras and other music groups. In groups where the focus is no longer on body image, but on the ability or the activity you are doing,



nobody is interested in what you look like then. It is about your skill and what you can do. It feels like you are not just being judged or being accepted based on how you look.

I do not think most people would know how to get support. I never knew support was available. I still would not know where to go. It is also seen as part of growing up by many adults who say, "Lots of people struggle with how they look and you are just growing up". It is just accepted that it happens.

Tatyana: Speaking from a burn survivor's perspective, things improved for me when I was introduced to a kids' camp. There were children from 10 to 18 years old who had burns. It made me realise that I was not alone in what I was going through. There were kids there who could understand: "Yes, I missed a bit of school as well because I had to go to hospital"; or "I had to get that same procedure. How was it?" It was nice to know that there was a community around me that could understand where I was coming from, especially having scarring and dealing with body image.

On accessing support, I personally have not heard of anything, or even seen anything, that identifies where body image issues start.

Q58 **Kim Johnson:** I was just curious as to whether you thought that the school played any role in providing a level of support, particularly in secondary school. Kate, I know you mentioned that your problems with body image started when you were seven. Do you think schools should be more aware of this and provide some level of support?

Cassianne: Yes, I feel like it should be implemented. Kate said it is normalised. If it is normalised, there should be support for it. I went to an all-girls school as well; we never had that type of support and a lot of girls were going through it. Something should be implemented in schools, yes.

Kate Roberts: Yes, there should be support in schools. In my experience, there was no support. Even if you went to them with something like this, not much was done. There was often a reason to excuse what had happened. The support just is not there.

Q59 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Thank you to all four of you for coming to give us evidence today. We have heard your really powerful testimonies, which will help us with this inquiry. Coronavirus has meant that we are all spending more time online, on our phones and on social media. Some of you have already touched on how social media has impacted your body image. How has spending more time online, and the impact of social media, impacted you personally?

Tatyana: I was able to use social media as a positive thing while in quarantine. A lot of the time, anyone who has scarring is portrayed as scary or hideous. It is not the case. By doing things on social media with



other burn survivors, I was able to show that we are just like everyone else. We just have that small difference, which is our scarring.

Social media is good in the sense that it helped me and other burn survivors get our message out there and show that we are just as normal as anyone else. It is just the scarring that makes us different. It gave me a good platform where I could share my own personal story, but also gave me the confidence to want to do more and show more young people that it is okay if you have a scar. It does not matter how small or big it is. There are so many people just like you and you can overcome whatever you are going through.

Q60 Alex Davies-Jones: Absolutely, you are such an inspiration. Danny, you have already mentioned that social media companies should be doing more, such as marking digitally altered images and adding warnings per se. Is there anything else they should be doing to try to counteract the awful things that we have been hearing?

Danny Bowman: Like I said, there are a number of steps that they could take. Obviously, they could mark photos so that young people are aware that these photos have been edited. A further step would be removing negative content much more readily. For example, I have heard horrific stories of pro-anorexia sites going unnoticed on social media and glorifying these saddening states of affairs. Social media can do a lot more to remove these images.

Social media can be a really positive thing. It is important to note that it can be a positive thing and a force for good. As Tatyana was saying, she used social media to help other burn victims. It can be a real force for good, but there are these negative aspects to it: for example, a lack of sense of reality, people editing their body images and negative content on it. It just needs to be removed; it is as simple as that. It is having such a disastrous impact on young people's mental health and body image. If we can start to do that, social media can be used as a force for good instead of something that leads to poor mental health.

Q61 Alex Davies-Jones: I would be interested to know if any of you have reported anything to social media companies and had any experience of that. What was your feedback for how they dealt with it in your own personal experiences?

Tatyana: I did a video with BBC Three called *Amazing Humans*. It shared the story of me and a personal friend of mine who got burned when she was 18 months old and I was eight. It showed her journey to starting her own foundation. One time, I do not know why, but I just looked at the comments. There was a really horrible comment and it said, "People who look like this do not deserve to live". It stopped me for a second. I think I reported it or someone else did; I cannot remember exactly. When I went on that video again, the comment was completely gone.



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This was on YouTube and I was proud that YouTube reacted so quickly. I know it takes a while for a lot of sites like Instagram or TikTok to put something into place. If that comment is still there, you do not know the personal effect that it has on a person to constantly see that negativity in their face.

Q62 Alex Davies-Jones: It is really good to hear that they acted so quickly; I am glad to hear that feedback. In terms of using social media for good, we are surrounded by adverts online and offline all day. We are bombarded by them. Are you aware of any adverts or brands that have made you feel more satisfied and helped you with your appearance to promote body positivity?

Tatyana: I am very interested in fashion and there was a brand advert by this company called Team Wang Design. It is interesting. Instead of using models for his clothing, his concept was called "Invisible Man". To some people, it was just that the shirts are moving, it looks cool and everything else, but I personally took it that it did not matter if I was this size, I had this scar, I looked a certain way or I was this race. He said that I could wear his clothing because I am just me. There was not any specific size or any specific model. I really enjoyed seeing that. In fashion, you do not really see things like that. I appreciated that concept of the Invisible Man and saying, "Everyone is welcome to wear my clothes, and you can wear my clothes and look really good".

Q63 Alex Davies-Jones: Are there any brands or adverts that you are aware of that are a force for good and bucking the trend a bit on promoting body positivity?

Danny Bowman: This is not specifically on brands, but I was just going to jump on what Tatyana said there. She made a really valid point in the sense of inclusivity. That has to be the key on social media platforms and brands generally advertising. We need a level of inclusivity that represents everyone, and a lot of that sends a very good message to young people specifically that they fit in within the parameters of society and what they look like is represented within society. That is a really positive step. I would encourage all brands, social media firms and influencers to have that level of inclusivity. That can be a real force for good.

Q64 Alex Davies-Jones: I completely agree with you. On the other hand, are you aware of any adverts or campaigns that have negatively impacted your body image? Is there any one that you have seen that particularly sticks out and is not inclusive?

Danny Bowman: You can see a lot of influencers online who are portraying a certain body type. I would not want to specifically name any key brands, although I can think of a couple of them. There are clothing brands, for example, that had a really detrimental impact on me when I was younger. You had to look like this Californian style or you were imperfect. You can probably guess the brand without me saying it.



Alex Davies-Jones: I absolutely can guess the brand, yes.

Danny Bowman: Those sorts of brands had a really negative impact and they were not inclusive at all. They portrayed one body type. If you did not replicate that body type, you were not going to be included within their idea of perfection. That was very difficult for me and it is very difficult for a lot of young people.

Q65 **Theo Clarke:** Danny, I wanted to pick up on your point about the use of apps to edit your appearance. I am very concerned to hear how social media can be used in that way for bullying and encouraging eating disorders. My colleagues asked about what social media companies can do; I wanted to ask the other question. What more do you think the Government can do? For example, is there more legislation that could be strengthened? Could the curriculum in school include something on this or on values, rather than just being taught information? Do you have any ideas for how Ministers could help in this area?

Danny Bowman: Absolutely. It is multi-layered. It is important to get around the table with social media firms and not necessarily encourage mass regulation, but encourage them to change some of their practices to enable social media to be a safer place. In relation to schools, perhaps in PSHE, it is important to add an element of awareness of social media and some of the negative sides to it.

Young people and parents should be made more aware of what happens on social media. Both of my parents are mental health professionals and they had no idea of what was happening on social media. That can be done by working with a range of organisations, which is really important. Having that knowledge sets a trajectory for young people to use social media in a very different way while working with social media firms to change some of their negative practices. It is a really balanced approach without just targeting social media. Making people more aware within society could set us on a really good trajectory.

Kate Roberts: They could teach about body confidence issues in schools, but not just as a compulsory thing in an assembly or PSHE: "We are going to give you all this information. This is where you go. This is what it is". A resource pack could be created for schools to use in these sessions, or something that actually engages young people, to help them to properly understand it, to build their confidence, not just to inform them of the issue, but to try to prevent it in the first place and make them feel more comfortable in the school environment. For me, that was where the issue was.

Theo Clarke: That is a very important point about signposting.

Tatyana: I am speaking as someone who has a visible difference. That would be something good to address in schools as well. Through campaigning and everything that I have done, I have met people who have port-wine stains, were born without a limb or have a facial



disfigurement caused by anything. It is important to address things like that as well. There will be that little boy or girl in school who may look different and cannot speak to anyone because they feel that no one will understand them. If it is brought up in a friendly way that kids can understand, they will feel less self-conscious about it and will be able to speak up about what they are going through and what their condition is.

- Q66 **Chair:** I want to pick up on some issues. Danny, I do not want to tempt you into identifying the bad, so I am going to try to give you some examples of companies that have improved their game but perhaps not as much as we would like to see. This is a wholly inappropriate brand to talk about to a panel of young people. Victoria's Secret has made more of an effort over the past couple of years to have more diverse models and different body shapes. Do you think that that makes a difference, or is that a brand that is too directed at, maybe, women of my age as opposed to young women, so it makes no difference? Anyone can answer that. We will go to Danny first, because he was talking about brands.

Danny Bowman: If any brand is willing to show a level of diversity and inclusivity, it is a positive step. Any step in that direction is inevitably going to be a good thing. Even if it might not be targeted towards young people, they are still walking down a High Street and they are still going to see posters of these things placarded around city centres or local communities. Anything like that is really positive. I commend Victoria's Secret for doing that. Any brand that does anything like that should be commended and encouraged to do more of it.

- Q67 **Chair:** We have spoken a lot about social media. I am really conscious that young people tend not to watch television live; they will not necessarily read newspapers or magazines. Is it a fair question to ask you all what proportion of your news information media you get online as opposed to offline?

Kate Roberts: I do use social media, but I use it just as much as I would use news websites, television and things. For me, it is about 50-50, but I know it is a lot higher for other people. If I am honest, I do not pay attention to adverts any more, because I know, especially for clothing, that most of the people do not look like me. The clothes will not fit me like they fit them. I just ignore them.

- Q68 **Chair:** Do you think that comes with age and experience?

Kate Roberts: Yes.

Cassianne: I feel the same. I do not really look at adverts any more, but I use social media a lot more than any other source. Sometimes it cannot be controlled, but I have now altered my social media so that it is more positive. It does not show lots of influencers on my Instagram. It will show kind stuff, quotes or stuff to do with positivity rather than seeing people I can compare myself to. I altered it myself but, if it was up to Instagram or typical apps, they would promote more of the influencers on my page.



Q69 **Chair:** That is a really good lesson for all of us: take back control for yourself rather than allow Instagram to dictate what you are seeing.

Tatyana: I do watch television, and sometimes I will watch the news with my grandma every now and again. Like the others, I am on social media. I am really careful about who I look up and personally follow. Sometimes you will see someone and they will do something positive, and because of the Instagram or social media algorithm it will bring up other people. You will see a perception of an influencer and think, "Hold on. Why is this person on my page?" You subconsciously flick through their things and think, "She looks pretty, but I do not look like that".

I am really careful about who I follow, who I look up and what I want to know about them, because I know that, when I search that, Instagram will end up bringing other people, which may start to affect my own body image and how I feel about myself.

Chair: That is the curse of the algorithm. We have heard that elsewhere.

Danny Bowman: I try to shy away from any advertisement. Like Tatyana, I try not to click on anything that could bring in other negative content. That is my approach generally. Most people now are using social media a lot more than watching TV or anything like that, to get their news. That can be detrimental, specifically around things like body image and mental health. I personally try to shy away from that, because I know it could have a negative impact on my mental health and my body image.

Q70 **Chair:** Kate, I think it was you and Danny who spoke about PSHE and the importance of teaching in school about inspiring more body confidence in young people. Do you have a view on what age we should start teaching that?

Kate Roberts: It should be taught in primary schools. I know that for me it started at a young age. I would say that the bullying I experienced in primary school was just as bad and had a longer impact. It should be taught maybe in different ways, introducing the idea that everyone looks different, getting children to understand the differences between people and to become more accepting of them, and then building that in.

Danny Bowman: I would say from 11 years old onwards, not to give an arbitrary age, but that is around the primary school age. The positive of starting it earlier is that it enables a level of prevention. The earlier we start it, the more likely we are to prevent any young person from experiencing negative body image and to encourage a positive vision of their body image moving forward. That could have a domino effect on a new generation of young people coming up, who will have a different idea about their body image than even my generation has. If we have a new generation of young people coming up who have a more positive body image because of PSHE lessons starting in primary school, that is going to be really, really positive. That is a step we should take.



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Cassianne: I agree it should be primary school, but maybe earlier than 11, so early primary school. As Kate said, do it in different ways, in not as much detail for the younger children, but let it be known, so it is normalised in case they do have an issue, or just to promote the positivity of it. Have it be normalised from a really early age, and then repeat it and continue speaking about it, with more detail as they age and with references for support as well.

Tatyana: I definitely agree with what the rest of the panel are saying about primary school. I would probably say year 4, because that was around the time I had my own accident. As Kate said, it would be important to show children that it is okay, that there are people who look different, that not everyone is the same. It will have such a positive impact and the way kids think about body image will start to change for the better.

Q71 **Chair:** Tatyana, can I just ask you specifically about burns? If you do not want to answer on this, just tell me. When Katie Piper, for example, who was a victim of an acid burn, talks about her story, does that help you? Does it help promote acceptance of the way people who have visible scarring look? Do we need to find more people who are prepared to talk openly about that sort of experience?

Tatyana: Yes. She was the only role model I had at the time. It was really helpful. Even though she had started the recovery process, it gave me the confidence to know that there was someone like me. When I went to the children's burns camp, there were a lot of kids, of different races, who had a variety of scarring. I do believe that it is important to have more people who are willing to speak up and say to young people and children, "I have been through this and it is okay that I look different".

There was a time when no one would speak about it. I would not speak about it. It was only when I had a group of friends who had burns that I could say, "No, I can speak about this to people who may not be burned and get them to understand how I grew up, where I was coming from and my mindset". Speaking was a really big problem for me. Because I did not have many people to look up to, I started to become depressed. I was really sad and really in myself. I would not want to speak to anyone.

Chair: You have done brilliantly this afternoon. Speaking is clearly not a problem any more, is it? Thank you very much for that.

Tatyana: Thank you.

Q72 **Chair:** I really, really appreciate it. I have a final question. Is there anything else that you want to leave us with? One takeaway I have had from this afternoon is that, at various points, you have all felt very alone. That has to tell us that, as policymakers, we need to do better, probably in the schools, to make sure that support is there so you do not feel alone. Do any of the panel want to come in with a final comment before we let you go this afternoon?



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Tatyana: In everything I do, especially nowadays, I always say to myself, "There is either a little boy or a little girl in their room who is looking for a role model". We need more people who think like that as well. It is good to have a panel of young people speaking about their body issues and things they have gone through. There could be a little boy who has faced the same thing as Danny. By Danny speaking up, that gives him someone to look up to. It is so important that our generation starts to be more open and speaks about things such as body image.

Chair: Thank you very much, Tatyana, Cassianne, Kate and Danny. You have all been amazing this afternoon. It has been really helpful for us as a Committee. Keep speaking up, all of you. It is really important.