



Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Countering extremism, HC 428

Tuesday 2 February 2016

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 2 February 2016

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Members present: Keith Vaz (Chair); Victoria Atkins, James Berry, Nusrat Ghani, Mr Ranil Jayawardena, Tim Loughton, Stuart C. McDonald, Naz Shah, Mr Chuka Umunna, Mr David Winnick.

Questions 983 – 1140

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Dr Anthony House**, Head of Public Policy Strategy, Google Europe, Middle East and Africa, **Simon Milner**, Policy Director for UK and Ireland, Middle East and Turkey, Facebook, and **Nick Pickles**, UK Public Policy Manager, Twitter, gave evidence.

Q983 Chair: Could I call the Committee to order and ask everyone present to note the Register of Members interests where the interests of members of this Committee are noted? I welcome our witnesses today as part of our ongoing inquiry into counter-terrorism and the counter-narrative. Obviously the issue that has been in the public domain at the moment has been about your tax from your companies. This Committee is not concerned about this because you will be giving evidence to our sister Committees next week but just as an opening question, Dr House, do you have anything to add to the statements that have been made publicly by your company on this issue?

Dr House: No, Chair, thank you. I would simply say thank you for having me here to discuss the important counter-terrorism work that we are doing and repeating that two of my colleagues who are experts in tax will be appearing before the Public Accounts Committee next week.

Chair: You have just become the largest company in the world, I understand, last night with a turnover bigger than Norway, Austria and Colombia. Congratulations.

Dr House: Thank you.

Q984 Chair: As far as Facebook is concerned there was a report in *The Times* today that you have set aside \$2 billion to settle your global tax bill but it does not include the United Kingdom.

Simon Milner: Thank you very much for inviting me to the Committee. I am aware of that news report, as you are, and such speculation in the media. Unlike other companies

Facebook has not made a statement about this so I am unable to help you further other than to say—

Q985 Chair: Will you be giving evidence to Public Accounts Committee as well?

Simon Milner: We have not been invited to give evidence to the Public Accounts Committee, but I would just say that like all large companies we have a tax team who are in regular contact with tax authorities about our affairs in countries where we operate and those are complex matters and I have not come here prepared to answer questions on that.

Q986 Chair: Twitter, will you be giving evidence to the Public Accounts Committee?

Nick Pickles: We have not been invited to give evidence to that Committee, but, as Simon says, we agree with all local tax laws and I have not prepared that issue.

Q987 Chair: Good. We have dealt with that. Let us now move on to counter-terrorism. We had evidence in our inquiry from Mark Rowley, who is the head of counter-terrorism for the Metropolitan Police, and indeed David Anderson, who is the independent assessor for the Government on counter-terrorism. Both expressed concern that when they have approached your companies—and each one of you can answer these questions even though we direct it to one witness—all have been less than helpful in respect of handing over information on counter-terrorism. In particular Mark Rowling said, and he used these phrases, that some internet firms were deliberately undermining counter-terrorism investigations, refusing to hand over potential evidence or threatening to tip off suspects, preferring to protect customer privacy. Dr House, do you think that criticism is fair?

Dr House: It is certainly a fair issue to bring up. We have a long history of working together with Government and with law enforcement authorities to ensure they have the information they need to pursue investigations. Our co-operation is obviously governed under both UK and US law but we do our best to make sure that we can provide information in the case of investigations. In Google's case we have long published statistics about our interactions with law enforcement authorities. For the UK there have obviously been an increasing number of requests for information from us. I think it has gone up from 1,200 in the first half of 2013 to about 3,000 in the first half of last year.

Q988 Chair: You have had 3,000 requests for information from the authorities?

Dr House: Yes.

Q989 Chair: What about Facebook?

Simon Milner: It is a similar number for each half year in the last few years, 3,000 to 4,000 in the UK. The UK is one of the highest, but just to be clear that is about all manner of things, not just counter-terrorism. But the expert team we have in the company that works in these spaces would confirm there has been an increase in the number of requests we have had on counter-terrorism.

Q990 Chair: Mr Pickles?

Nick Pickles: In the first half of 2015 we received 299 account information requests. I think one of the things that reflects is that Twitter is a public platform so you can look at a Twitter account without even having a Twitter account yourself. There is a huge amount of information available without having to ask us directly.

Q991 Chair: Mr Pickles, you understand our concern when the head of counter-terrorism says that you are undermining efforts? He did not name the companies but he talked generally of internet companies and he went on to talk about people being tipped off. In fact, David Anderson in his report, published in June 2015, said this, “Some service providers will tip off a customer that they are under surveillance unless persuaded not to do so, typically by a court order”. Have you all tipped off customers that they are under surveillance?

Nick Pickles: Let me be absolutely clear. I think this is an issue where some of the media reporting has not helped form a good understanding of policy.

Q992 Chair: Sure, that is why you are here.

Nick Pickles: Absolutely.

Chair: You are here so that you do not have to rely on Twitter or the media. You can tell us, have you tipped off customers that they are under surveillance?

Nick Pickles: The first question is, are they under surveillance? We are not part of that discussion. Where a specific request for user data is made to our company under many jurisdictions around the world there are legal frameworks that exist to provide notice to that user. One of the things we are very clear about—reading the transcript of when David Anderson spoke to this Committee he said he was not aware of any circumstances where the situation Mr Rowley outlined had occurred, but we are very, very clear—

Q993 Chair: We have spoken to him since his appearance and reminded him of what he said in June 2015, and that he did say that in his report. You are saying you do tip people off, but that you have to do so because if the UK authorities ask you for certain information there are other jurisdictions in the world where you have to tell the customer. Is that what you are saying?

Nick Pickles: Let me be clear. In the US and other jurisdictions there is a legal framework that provides for certainty. Our policy is very clear. We seek to provide user notice, and I will quote directly from our policy, “Exceptions to prior notice may include exigent or counterproductive circumstances”. So, we work with law enforcement on a case-by-case basis to make sure we do not disrupt those investigations you are discussing.

Q994 Chair: But you have not been clear. You have been slightly more complicated. We just want the simple answer. If a UK authority like the head of counter-terrorism says, “We would like this information” are you duty bound by either your policy or the law of another country to tell that user that this information has been requested? It is a yes or a no.

Nick Pickles: No. By our policy we allow ourselves to not notify a user where it is counterproductive so we do not—

Chair: That is a double negative.

Nick Pickles: We would like to tell users but we do not have to.

Q995 Chair: So, you have not told users that this information has been requested? You never tell users?

Nick Pickles: No, we do tell users and it is content-specific.

Q996 Chair: You have contradicted yourself, Mr Pickles?

Nick Pickles: No, it is content-specific. If, let us say, for example, the police request information pertaining to a journalist or a Member of Parliament we would seek to give notice because in that case it is reasonable to do so.

Chair: So, if the police ask you—

Nick Pickles: In a counter-terrorism situation it would not be.

Q997 Chair: Just slightly slower. We have plenty of time so do not worry. If it is an MP or a journalist that the authorities requested information about you would tell those people?

Nick Pickles: Again, it is dependent on the investigation. If it was counter-terrorism—

Q998 Chair: But you just said that you would tell them?

Nick Pickles: Again I said it was content-specific. There are certain roles where it may be more reasonable to give user notice than others.

Q999 Chair: We understand the word reasonable because we are lawmakers and therefore we have to deal with these words all the time. I am just asking you for facts, Mr Pickles. Do you tell people other than journalists and MPs that the authorities have asked for information?

Nick Pickles: Yes.

Q1000 Chair: Thank you. Mr Milner, are you in the same position that you, in effect, tip off people and tell them when information is requested?

Simon Milner: No. We do not do it in the UK.

Q1001 Chair: Do you do it in America?

Simon Milner: Yes, sometimes, but not in every case. It does depend somewhat on rules in the particular jurisdiction and indeed it is a matter before the Investigatory Powers Joint Committee, which is looking at exactly this issue.

Chair: *I am sure we will come on to that.*

Simon Milner: In the UK we do not do it and even if we could we would never do it in respect of counter-terrorism cases.

Q1002 Chair: Yes, so if Mr Rowley or someone else like him says, “We want this information; it is a terrorism investigation” you would never inform the user?

Simon Milner: That is correct.

Q1003 Chair: You would just hand over the information if it came within the criteria?

Simon Milner: If it met our criteria. We review every case on a case-by-case basis but we would not be tipping someone off.

Q1004 Chair: Thank you. So, it is a yes from Nick Pickles, yes from Twitter. It is a definite no from Facebook in the UK but in America it is different. We accept that and we understand that. What is the situation with Google, Dr House?

Dr House: We are in the same situation as Facebook where it is jurisdiction dependent. Obviously we follow the law in the jurisdictions where we operate, but where it is not prevented we are disclosing as appropriate in the context of the investigation.

Q1005 Chair: In respect of taking down items that are on the internet, we have also received a lot of evidence over the last few months and, indeed in our previous report, that person-to-person radicalisation has been replaced by radicalisation and grooming on the net and therefore internet companies are obviously important in that context. We have also had evidence that in 289 days groups like Anonymous and Ghost Security have taken down or reported 2,555 websites, reported 19,568 Twitter pages and reported 40,000 suspected terrorist materials in total on the internet. Do you have figures, Dr House, as to the number of websites that you all have taken down, that you all deem to be websites that propagate terrorism?

Dr House: We do not break down our removals by the specific criterion on which we remove them. It is probably worth stepping back and putting it into context. We obviously operate YouTube, which is a visual platform for sharing information, and we also operate a search engine. In the case of YouTube where we are hosting materials and we set community guidelines that set the rules of the road for what is acceptable we have had a zero tolerance approach to terrorism for years. We first put up a flagging option for terrorist content in 2008 and we have adapted our policy over time to take into account new ways that people are abusing the platform to make sure that that zero tolerance policy is put into effect well.

Q1006 Chair: How many have you taken down in total?

Dr House: On the YouTube side we receive about 100,000 flags a day. but that is across all types of abuse.

Chair: A day?

Dr House: A day.

Q1007 Chair: In the UK?

Dr House: No, globally. 2014 is the last year for which we have numbers. We have removed 14 million videos from YouTube in 2014. Again that is across all types of abuse.

Q1008 Chair: Are you able to be more specific in the future? Would you be able to look at the number of websites and the number of items that have terrorism content? Are you able to do that?

Dr House: We are not able to do it right now, but we are certainly open to and we are actively thinking about ways that we can be more transparent about what we remove and what rules it violates. It is worth noting, though, that one of the reasons it is difficult is because if somebody is offended by something on YouTube they go into our flagging procedure and a lot of those flags overlap. So, they could flag for terrorist content but at the same time they might flag for hate speech or incitement to violence and those are all slightly different. At present we are not able to count that way, but it is something we are keen to think about as regards how we can do a better job.

Q1009 Chair: Mr Milner, your boss, Cheryl Sandberg, was pretty critical a few days ago about the content on the net. She said she felt it had become a place where hate was being disseminated. Is that right?

Simon Milner: Absolutely.

Q1010 Chair: What prompted Cheryl Sandberg to say that and how many pages or profiles has Facebook taken down, for example, in the last year relating specifically to counter-terrorism?

Simon Milner: Can I take the first part of your question, on what prompted Cheryl Sandberg to say that, and then I will take the second part around data? What prompted it was the announcement of an initiative called the Online Civil Courage Initiative that was announced a couple of weeks ago in Berlin, a joint initiative with two UK-based organisations, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue and the institute for the study of research into countering violent extremism—the ICSR—based at King’s College. This is an initiative that will combine support for NGOs that are trying to use the internet for counter-speech and a counter-narrative, some research into what works and then training around best practice. So, what Cheryl said was part of that.

Q1011 Chair: What prompted this? Why did Cheryl Sandberg suddenly say this after all these years?

Simon Milner: It absolutely was not sudden, Chairman. This was something that as a company we have taken very seriously for a number of years, but, of course, as events in the world have unfolded in recent years—and this has become probably the number one public policy issue that I talk about with Governments across the many countries that I cover as well as in the UK—this has just risen up the policy agenda and I am sure you would agree that it has been the same for yourselves. So, it has risen up our agenda as well and we want to ensure we are learning from organisations that work on the ground, from

the best academic researchers, and that we are providing the best support. So, it is absolutely a demonstration of—

Q1012 Chair: Are you going to publish the outcomes of the initiative?

Simon Milner: Absolutely. This is a three year long initiative and there will be more to follow. Do you want me to cover the second part of your question?

Chair: Very quickly.

Simon Milner: We do not provide the same level of detail as yet as Google do around takedown, so we provide similar information around the requests we get from Governments but at the moment we do not provide public data on the number of pieces of content or accounts that we take down.

Q1013 Chair: Finally from you, Mr Pickles, on this, the Turkish Government has just fined Twitter \$50,000 for refusing to remove what it considers terrorist propaganda. I have just been looking at the pages of Mumsnet for Jihadists and the tweets they have sent out today. One of them says, “I asked about the paths to paradise. It was said that there is no path shorter than jihad”. This is pretty hot stuff in support of Anjem Choudary. What are you doing about those who are using Twitter in order to propagate terrorism in this way, because it is quite obvious? You do not need a BA in counter-terrorism to understand that they are recruiting using Twitter.

Nick Pickles: First, in terms of statistics we have take down tens of thousands of accounts. We, like Google, are thinking about how we can be more transparent.

Q1014 Chair: Is that last year or is that in the life of Twitter?

Nick Pickles: Those figures would be in the cumulative period of the last 12 months.

Q1015 Chair: Are they broken down between counter-terrorism and other areas or are they global as they are in the case of other companies?

Nick Pickles: That specific figure of tens of thousands of accounts is specifically relating to violent extremist accounts.

Chair: Tens of thousands?

Nick Pickles: Tens of thousands, yes.

Q1016 Chair: You have taken down tens of thousands of Twitter pages.

Nick Pickles: Yes, and we are currently looking and considering how we can be more transparent because we appreciate there is interest in this area, so we are having internal discussions about whether there is more we can do to provide extra data, and if we are able to do so I am happy to write to the Committee subsequently with that data.

Q1017 Chair: Would you be able to publish this information on a much more regular basis, because it does not need a Select Committee of the House to get this information, does it?

Nick Pickles: No, and like other companies we publish six-monthly transparency reports so one of the questions we are asking internally is can we add this kind of data to our takedown reports, which we already publish?

Q1018 Chair: But you all accept, each of you, yes or no, that now this is the No. 1 way that people are being groomed on the internet for extremism? Dr House?

Dr House: The question is, is the internet the No. 1 way that people are being groomed? I am afraid I do not know enough about how people are groomed offline to answer, but it is obviously something that we take very seriously.

Simon Milner: I am not sure I do agree but also I think you would be better off talking to people like the Quilliam Foundation, like the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, and like the properly named International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation—I apologise to them for getting their name wrong earlier. They are the experts on how people are groomed. We are not. We are the experts on how we can keep this kind of content off Facebook, but what happens outside of Facebook we cannot see.

Nick Pickles: I would agree. Professor Peter Neumann has written a lot about this and I would recommend his writings to the Committee.

Chair: Mr Jayawardena has a quick supplementary then Nusrat Ghani.

Q1019 Mr Jayawardena: Dr House, I just wanted to follow up on one point. You said that you had removed 14 million videos, which is an extraordinary figure, and that shows that Google's current policy, if I understand it correctly, which is a team of reviewers working round the clock to look at the videos manually, is certainly working to an extent. But are you confident that it is succeeding in removing the dangerous material quickly enough in terms of preventing people from being radicalised in a short window, although a short window could be time enough?

Dr House: It is certainly something that we think about and we review how we do removals on a regular basis. It is worth noting that 400 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute and the vast majority of that is people using the product in the way it is intended, not to abuse anyone, not to radicalise. Since YouTube was founded, and as it has grown, we have had to think about what is the best way to do this and continuing to this day—we have a billion people on the platform every month—we have found that the best way to get this stuff down quickly and to get it down reliably remains to have people flagging it and then removing it quickly, which happens quickly. It happens within a number of hours.

Q1020 Nusrat Ghani: Mr Milner, you said that the initiatives that are taking place at the moment to deal with terrorism have, as you call it, recently come into the public domain to become a policy issue. Most of us would argue it has been an issue for a long time and that your organisations are now just coming forward to accept some responsibility that people are being radicalised on your platform, so you have an issue with managing your brand—your

company brands—because they seem to be hijacked by terrorist organisations who are grooming vulnerable people on your platforms. What would you say to that, Dr House?

Dr House: This is not something that we have only just started thinking about. As I mentioned, we have had a zero tolerance policy on YouTube towards terrorist content since 2008 when we implemented the flag. We hosted our first summit on violent extremism in 2011. We have been working with the CTIRU at the Home Office since 2012. We hosted a counter-speech event with the Home Office and then with you fairly soon after that so this is a multi-year—

Chair: With the Committee, not the Home Office.

Dr House: Sorry, yes, with the Committee in 2013, I believe. This is something we have been thinking about for many years and obviously there is more work to be done.

Q1021 Nusrat Ghani: If you have zero tolerance on YouTube how can videos appear to enable people to groom younger vulnerable people or to export terrorism? How is your zero tolerance working?

Dr House: As I said, we have 400 hours of video loaded every minute and we therefore rely on the community to flag videos that violate our zero tolerance policy. For people who violate that policy after multiple violations or one serious violation we will terminate the account and we prevent the person who created that account from creating a new account.

Q1022 Nusrat Ghani: Who decides what is a serious violation?

Dr House: Our community guidelines are fairly clear on the different types of infractions that happen. There are different ways that people will abuse a service like YouTube but to be clear we strictly prohibit calls for or the glorification of violence. We specifically ban videos at training camps or direct recruitment. We specifically ban incitement of hatred against people based on their gender or race or nationality and those are all serious violations of our policies.

Simon Milner: I can understand why something like the announcement that was made a couple of weeks ago, that I talked about earlier, can look as if the company has just discovered this. That is not the case. It is all about—

Q1023 Nusrat Ghani: No, I said that the company was worried about its brand reputation. Or was it accepting some responsibility?

Simon Milner: We absolutely accept that we have a responsibility to act in partnership with civil society, with Governments, with expert academics.

Nusrat Ghani: No, accepting responsibility that its platforms are being used to generate extremism.

Simon Milner: We accept the responsibility that we have to be acting on this, absolutely. We are not responsible for the behaviour of people who abuse our platform but we are responsible for ensuring we have the right policies in place and very well-trained people who can act on reports quickly and take action as required. But most important we

have a responsibility to help those organisations like Imams Online, like the Active Change Foundation, like Connect Justice, who want use our platform for good. So, as well as the OCCI initiative there are a number of other partnerships we have in this country and elsewhere where we are helping organisations who want to present an alternative view—typically of Islam, or it could be another religion or another belief—who want to use our platform for good. So, that is something we have taken seriously for a long time. In fact I appeared before this Committee three years ago to talk about this very issue. We have learnt a lot since then and we are continuing to improve what we do and invest more money into it.

Nick Pickles: First, to echo policy points, our policies clearly prohibit encouraging terrorism, promoting terrorism. One of the questions we have to ask as companies is about the fact that sometimes what is on our platform is a reflection of society and sometimes that is very uncomfortable because what you see is a very transparent view on what people are thinking. I think where our responsibility is—I know this is an area the Committee might want to look into—and the role of companies is making sure people can use our platforms to challenge ideas. We can remove all the content but even if we remove the content the idea remains, and a lot of this is about ideology and about ideas and if we do not challenge the ideas then the issues will remain and will not be solved.

Q1024 Nusrat Ghani: But you are not then generating conversation to challenge those ideas. I find it difficult to understand that Google, Twitter and Facebook take no responsibility whatsoever for people using their platforms to radicalise other people. If you had a shop and somebody walked in and started shouting abuse at another customer or trying to recruit someone to be involved in a terrorist act I hope that you as an individual would try to remove them from the shop, not expect someone else to come in to do that. But you are on your platforms. You are expecting other people to monitor or remove. Do you not take any responsibility?

Simon Milner: Ms Ghani, if we use that example that is exactly what we do. We remove them from the shop and we prevent them having a voice in our community. Also, if I just talk to you a little bit about what we have seen, working with experts can be the most effective voice—because one of the questions always put to us is, why do you not have a voice? Why does Facebook not step in and say, “Hey, that is not right?” The work we have done with Demos looking at what kind of counter-speech works shows us that it is not about the platform—it is also not Government or elected politicians whose voice matters in these debates—but people who are more like those young people who might be radicalised and people who use humour. It is people who use very eye-catching content who can be more effective at drowning out those negative voices in our community.

Q1025 Chair: Before I bring in Mr Umunna and Victoria Atkins, can you just tell us how many people are in your hit squads, the places where this content is monitored and then reported or taken down, Mr Pickles?

Nick Pickles: More than 100. It covers a lot of different teams so a specific number is difficult but more than 100.

Q1026 Chair: For—how many accounts worldwide do you have, remind us?

Nick Pickles: There are 320 million people using Twitter and we have a variety of tools. On Simon's point, one of the issues we have is stopping people coming back on the platform so that resembles other technical challenges so we can use—

Q1027 Chair: One hundred to monitor 320 million?

Nick Pickles: There are more than 100. It varies depending on issues, with language specialists.

Q1028 Chair: Mr Milner, Facebook, what is in the hit squad?

Simon Milner: We have a community operations team. We do not have a public number for that but it does number in the thousands of employees who are part of our community operations team, the vast majority of whom, though, do not focus on counter-terrorism. We have an expert team that focuses specifically on the issue of terrorism and then there is a wider team that focus on—

Q1029 Chair: How many are in that, Mr Milner?

Simon Milner: I am afraid I cannot give you a number.

Q1030 Chair: Would you write to us and tell us?

Simon Milner: I am afraid not. It is not a public number that we provide but I would be very happy for you to come and meet some of them. You are very welcome to come to our Dublin office where some of them work, come and meet that team and understand a bit more about that expertise and how they work.

Q1031 Chair: Thanks for the invitation. We will let you know. Dr House?

Dr House: Much like Facebook I am not in a position to share a number. We do not have a public number for the size of our removals team but it is a significant number.

Q1032 Chair: Do you have such a squad?

Dr House: We do and it is around the world.

Q1033 Chair: Is it also based in Dublin?

Dr House: We have some people based in Dublin but we have people staffing it 24 hours a day, seven days a week so it is a global team.

Q1034 Chair: You did not tell me the number of accounts you had worldwide.

Simon Milner: The latest number we have is 1.59 billion accounts but remember we are not monitoring them although we are handling reports. We are handling millions of reports every day. Most of them are not about the issue that this Committee is looking into.

Q1035 Victoria Atkins: Questions first of all to all three of you. You presumably all believe in corporate social responsibility, yes?

Dr House: Yes.

Q1036 Victoria Atkins: Indeed, Google, your slogan until October last year was “Don’t be evil”. Is that right, Dr House?

Dr House: It still is.

Q1037 Victoria Atkins: Right, and you must accept sitting here as you do representing three of the largest companies on the internet that sadly the internet plays a vital role in extremism and terrorism from the perspective of extremists and terrorists?

Dr House: Certainly a serious problem I would say, yes.

Simon Milner: I am not sure I would use the word “vital”. That implies that it would not exist if the internet did not exist. It is impossible for us to know because the internet is so pervasive but the problem with terrorism is clearly not something that started with the internet.

Q1038 Victoria Atkins: No, all right. Let’s try to get a little closer together, then. You would accept that when we look at terrorism historically, now that the internet is here it is easier for extremists and terrorists to speak to each other than it was 20 or 30 years ago?

Simon Milner: Of course. It is easier for everyone to communicate. That is the whole purpose of our services.

Q1039 Victoria Atkins: Just to keep an eye on it, given the questions I am about to ask you, of course this is also the case for paedophilia sadly. The internet plays a role in that?

Simon Milner: Our companies have been at the absolute forefront of helping to combat the spread of such material and to bring people to justice.

Q1040 Victoria Atkins: Also serious organised crime because criminals use the internet just as everybody else does?

Simon Milner: Yes.

Q1041 Victoria Atkins: So, why did none of your companies choose to attend the Joint Committee that is scrutinising the Draft Investigatory Powers Bill in the House of Lords at the moment?

Nick Pickles: I think first, one can say there was a joint statement made that was a comprehensive statement of issues with the Bill. Secondly, I understand the Committee wanted us to attend together and the Committee was working on a very accelerated timescale. So, there was not a refusal. My understanding was the fact that trying to get people from companies across the world in the same room at the same time at just a few weeks’ notice was difficult. I think our submission will evidence the fact of how seriously and how comprehensively we have looked at this Bill, and indeed the seriousness with which we take this Bill. The fact that five global tech companies—the three of us and

Microsoft and Yahoo—came together to make a unified statement about our concerns with the Bill demonstrates just how seriously we are taking it.

Q1042 Victoria Atkins: May I deal with the timing factor? I should declare I am on the Committee. This meeting today was organised at very short notice, was it not—last week or perhaps two weeks ago?

Nick Pickles: Yes.

Q1043 Victoria Atkins: We have managed to get all three of you in the room. The Joint Committee made significant efforts to fit in with your companies' timetables so that we could hear your evidence and yet you still declined. Why were you afraid to come before the Joint Committee to be asked about your views on what is one of the most important pieces of legislation this Parliament will deal with?

Nick Pickles: First, I think there has been a discussion with the Committee for some time over diary dates¹. I know I made several comments about when I was free over a prolonged period of time. Secondly, our joint submission is very clear. We are not afraid of engaging on this issue. I gave evidence to the previous Joint Committee on the Communications Data Bill in a previous role and the substance of the submission you saw from industry on this Bill more than surpasses the kind of discussion that happened last time. So, I do not accept the premise of the question. I think we have taken it very seriously.

Simon Milner: I have nothing to add to the logistics points that Mr Pickles has made but I would say that I reject any suggestion that this implies that our companies do not care about the issue, do not care about the Investigatory Powers Bill and the important powers it will convey on the authorities, or do not care about the issues that we have particularly addressed in our submission, nor does it mean that we do not take our responsibilities seriously in respect of the issues before this Committee.

Dr House: The logistical challenges are a bit outside my direct area of expertise. I cover all of Europe, the Middle East and Africa. But I would simply repeat that we are committed to working with the British Government in making sure the Investigatory Powers Bill—

Q1044 Victoria Atkins: I should add we heard evidence from a judge in New Zealand at 5.00 pm our time, 5.00 am his time, so we did do Skype if that was available to any of your employees internationally, but we will leave it there.

Mr Pickles, I want to deal with your phrase about when Twitter chooses to tip off people that law enforcement have made inquiries about with you. I think I picked up the phrase that you said that you would tell users when it may be reasonable to tell them that they are the subject of law enforcement. Have I heard you correctly?

¹ **Note from witness:** Victoria Atkins commented that today's evidence session had been organised at very short notice. In fact, the initial invitation to Twitter to give oral evidence was received on 14 December, allowing a six-week period in which to find a date which was convenient for all three companies. I informed the committee on 5 January that I was available to give evidence on either 26 January or 2 February and held both these dates in my diary to ensure I was available on the confirmed date.

Nick Pickles: It is content-specific, yes.

Q1045 Victoria Atkins: What is the interpretation of reasonableness according to Twitter?

Nick Pickles: It would be the same kind of reasonableness that a US court would use or indeed any court. It is a useful opportunity for me to clarify and I apologise to the Committee if I was not clear. In the case of an ongoing counter-terrorism investigation that would be a circumstance where we would not seek to provide user notification that a request for the data had been made.

Q1046 Chair: Let us be clear. You said you did tip them off. You are now saying you did not.

Nick Pickles: I am not aware of specific cases but in the case of a hypothetical case of a counter-terrorist request for user data, that is a case that would fall within the exception, which is clearly in our policy, as a counterproductive circumstance.

Q1047 Victoria Atkins: Does paedophilia fall within that definition?

Nick Pickles: I think that is another example of where we would not seek to provide user notice because of an ongoing investigation.

Q1048 Victoria Atkins: Does serious organised crime fit within that definition?

Nick Pickles: Again, I imagine that is a circumstance where we would not provide user notice.

Q1049 Victoria Atkins: Who makes the decision on reasonableness for Twitter?

Nick Pickles: We have a legal team working on these issues. As I say, it is worth pointing out in terms of the number of requests in a year, we see hundreds. For a platform of 320 million people globally, more than 15 million in the UK, in the first half of 2015 we had 299 requests. To put this into context, there is a huge amount of information available publicly on Twitter that does not need to come to us. We also work with the police. Tomorrow morning I am joining a conference call to help the police understand our policies in this area.

Chair: Yes, you have said that.

Q1050 Victoria Atkins: I just want to get to the bottom of this because, as you will understand, one of the balancing acts that the Joint Committee is having to grapple with is the balance of civil liberties against national security and keeping our country safe from both terrorism and serious organised crime. I just want to get a sense of who decides in your legal team that a request made by law enforcement is unreasonable. What right of appeal do police officers have against that?

Nick Pickles: This is why, as I say, tomorrow morning we are having a conversation with UK law enforcement to discuss these issues, to help them understand our policies. It is also one of the reasons why in our submission—in the US, to give you an

example, and in other jurisdictions there is a time period for police once they have requested data to investigate, and at the end of that time period, the police can either allow user notification to happen or go before a judge and ask for an extension—one of the questions that we have asked of the Investigatory Powers Bill is whether such a framework would make the situation clearer for everybody if a judge makes a decision whether someone should be notified or not.

Q1051 Chair: Mr Milner, anything to add? You do not have to add, just nod if you do not have—

Simon Milner: Nothing to add.

Chair: Dr House, no?

Dr House: I do not have anything to add unless there is something else that you want to know from me specifically.

Q1052 Victoria Atkins: Mr Pickles, I find it very interesting that a tech company should be telling Parliament how best to police law enforcement and security service inquiries. I suspect that may be one of the reasons why your company decided it was best not to come before the Committee.

Nick Pickles: I apologise if that was the impression I gave. I did not mean to give that impression.

Chair: Thanks very much. The final question.

Q1053 Victoria Atkins: The Investigatory Powers Bill focuses on the double lock; that is, the mechanism by which the Secretary of State, be it the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland or whoever, judges a warrant to be necessary and proportionate and by which it is then approved by a judicial commissioner. My final question to you, Mr Pickles, is why Twitter thinks that your legal team supersedes the Home Secretary and the judicial commissioner in its definition of reasonableness.

Nick Pickles: I think if you look at the submission our companies have made on this particular point, one of the questions we have is what happens when a request that has gone through that process may be either technically not possible or may be a request for information that would not be in compliance with US law. There is a conflict of law question in this area of policy, which is why all our companies have encouraged the British Government and the United States Government to work closely on building a legal framework because we do not want to have to make those decisions. We would like a court to make those decisions and the legal framework—

Q1054 Victoria Atkins: Mr Pickles, you are not answering my question. I asked you what gives your legal team in Twitter the right to override the Secretary of State and the judicial commissioner.

Nick Pickles: As I say, we are not overriding anybody. What we are doing is respecting that there are different legal frameworks at play and we would like—

Q1055 Victoria Atkins: I am not interested in the legal frameworks elsewhere. I am talking about a warrant being issued in the United Kingdom to stop a terrorist attack. What gives Twitter the right to override the Home Secretary and the judicial commissioner?

Nick Pickles: In the case of an emergency threat to life, we would provide information and have consistently done so, as none of the witnesses have raised otherwise, but this is one of the very reasons why an international legal framework is so important.

Chair: Yes, I think you have made that clear. Thank you. We have to move on. Before I bring in Mr Winnick, Mr Umunna had a supplementary on the original set of questions, I think.

Q1056 Mr Umunna: Yes, I first of all wanted to follow up on a question that you asked, Chair.

Chair: Yes, please.

Mr Umunna: Mr Pickles provided an answer but Mr Milner and Dr House did not, and it was in relation to the number of people working in the teams removing content. Now, Mr Pickles has provided us with a rough figure against a user group of 320 million, I think you said. What I do not understand is why Dr House and Mr Milner will not provide those details to the Committee. Both of you did not just say that you cannot; you have said that your companies will not provide those figures publicly. Why?

Simon Milner: I am happy to take that away, Mr Umunna, and write to the Committee in regard to it. I will check again with my colleagues, but my understanding is we have been asked this question before. I was asked it three years ago. It is not information that we make public, but I will ask again.

Dr House: We are in a similar situation.

Mr Umunna: You will write to us on that?

Dr House: We will write to you.

Q1057 Mr Umunna: Okay. My two points: one was for Twitter and the other was for all of you. I want to check one thing that has been reported and was reported in April of last year, Mr Pickles. This was in the *Daily Mail*, which is why I want to check whether or not it is factually correct. Is it true that more than 10,000 accounts linked to Daesh militants and their supporters were suspended in a 24-hour period in a fresh crackdown on those tweeting violent threats? Is that correct?

Nick Pickles: To date we have definitely suspended more than tens of thousands of accounts. As to that specific time period I am not sure, but cumulatively we have certainly suspended more than that figure of accounts.

Q1058 Mr Umunna: Would you be able to write to the Committee and let us know whether that is an accurate report or not and, if it is, explain why, if it is the case that this was done in a 24-hour period, 10,000 or more were done in that 24-hour period and were not suspended beforehand? Do you think you could write and explain to us why?

Nick Pickles: Absolutely, yes.

Q1059 Mr Umunna: The questions that the Chair and others have posed to you have been based around when you receive a request for information from a law enforcement agency. I want to ask you a question about the threshold that applies in each of your companies before you proactively notify law enforcement of there being terrorist material that has been identified by your company or by users. What is the threshold beyond which you decide in each of your companies that you must proactively notify the law enforcement agencies?

Dr House: A threat to life.

Simon Milner: Exactly the same for us.

Nick Pickles: We do not proactively notify and one of the things is that because Twitter is public that content is available, so often it has been seen already. Then law enforcement have established criteria to come to us and request information.

Q1060 Mr Umunna: Just so I have that right, Twitter has no proactive approach to notifying law enforcement of potential terrorist material on Twitter?

Nick Pickles: No, and actually one of the things that it is very important to flag here is this was discussed in Congress recently. There were discussions about putting this into a legal requirement and the FBI director was asked whether he would support such a proposal. He did not support that proposal. One of the reasons is that, as I say, if we are taking down tens of thousands of accounts, that is a huge amount of information and we are not in a position to judge credibility of those threats. You may end up in a situation where you swamp law enforcement with unwanted information, so I think that is why the FBI director said what he said.

Q1061 Mr Umunna: Notwithstanding whatever the FBI felt was appropriate for the United States, with regard to the United Kingdom, do you think it is right that you are the ones who should determine the threshold that should apply in those circumstances? Or do you believe that the better approach would be for there to be a legal framework that others, perhaps judicially, can apply to determine when you should proactively provide information on potential terrorist activity on your platforms?

Nick Pickles: A legal framework is always preferable. The one problem we have in this area is different covenant countries around the world—we all operate internationally—have a different definition sometimes of what is a terrorist. A legal framework is preferable, but it is important to bear in mind the international precedent you would set in that space.

Chair: Yes, thank you. You have said that before. Thank you.

Q1062 Mr Winnick: There are two separate issues. I will come to the question of the powers the Home Secretary wants, which was raised by my colleague Ms Atkins. First, do you accept there is dissatisfaction generally, certainly not only in Parliament but among the public, over the way in which those who wish to engage in terror use social media and

continue to do so? It is a yes or no response. Do you accept there is this feeling of dissatisfaction?

Dr House: Speaking for Google, absolutely. We would prefer if no one abused our platform to abuse individuals or to promote terrorism.

Mr Winnick: One assumes you do—

Simon Milner: I think in general the fact that there is enormous public disquiet about extremism and terrorism and radicalisation, then, of course, people are right to be concerned about it wherever it appears, including online.

Q1063 Mr Winnick: You see, if you take, for example, one of the two murderers of the soldier, Lee Rigby, he put his aims on Facebook saying what he intended to do. I understand that Facebook had not been aware of what occurred. However, the Intelligence and Security Committee here then discovered that Facebook had previously shut down this person's account, obviously very rightly so, but failed to relay such concerns to the security service. Would that be right, Mr Milner?

Simon Milner: Mr Winnick, the Committee of which you speak in their report did not name any company. I am unable to talk about individual cases, as I hope you would understand, but I can reassure you that when our company comes across information that there is an immediate threat to life, we provide that to the authorities. Any requests associated with terrorists or would-be terrorists we take extremely seriously and we have an expert team that deal with those cases.

Q1064 Mr Winnick: And as for the person who was sentenced yesterday—the female who had gone with her young child to Syria then returned—during the course of the proceedings in court and also in the judge's summing up when the person had been found guilty by the jury, it appeared that she had used social media to advertise her intentions. The whole point—the reason that you are here to a large extent—is that with which I started at the beginning of my questioning, the concern that what could not possibly happen in any way with ordinary print material happens on social media because of the very nature of the companies in which you are senior executives.

Simon Milner: I would draw a very strong distinction between, say, the pages of the *Daily Mail* online or *The Times* online and Facebook. Facebook is a community of almost 1.6 billion people. There are billions of things being posted every single day, most of that extremely benign, indeed uplifting, from right across the world. However, just like the UK, which has a population of 60-odd million, there are some bad people and there are some people who want to use our service with ill intent, including the most serious crime of terrorism.

Mr Winnick: To say the least.

Simon Milner: To say the least, absolutely, and we absolutely want to root them out and do everything we can to stop them doing that, Mr Winnick. Believe me, we are committing more resources to this month by month and learning as we go and working very closely with the authorities. We would much prefer that was not the case. Much as we would prefer that there were not people trying to radicalise young people in communities right across the UK, we would love to be able to press a button to get rid of

them, but you cannot. It is not as easy as that. It takes a lot of effort, a lot of resource, a lot of intelligence. Believe me, we are applying our best endeavours to this and we will continue to do so. We expect to be held to account as per this Committee for what we are doing and we are very serious about it.

Q1065 Chair: Mr Pickles, do you want to answer Mr Winnick's question?

Nick Pickles: I think one of the points, just to follow on, is yes, social media brings out things that are discomfiting and it highlights issues in society. There was some research from Northern Ireland, which was funded by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, that said while the challenge is there, there is also an opportunity, and the opportunity for using social media to engage across cultural boundaries, across social boundaries, where they did not exist previously is how people will meet people from different faiths. Megan Phelps-Roper, who was the person who formerly ran the social media for the Westboro Baptist Church, talked very movingly—she is coming into our office in a few weeks—about how engaging with someone over social media was how she rehumanised in her mind this other person that she had been told she should hate. That process led to her leaving the Westboro Baptist Church. I think this is also an opportunity to challenge ideas.

Q1066 Mr Winnick: While there is unanimous opinion in Parliament, to say the least, that every effort should be made to avoid social media being used by those who want to carry out terrorism atrocities like we saw in Paris and, indeed, in London in 7/7, there is not the same unanimous view about what the Home Secretary is intending to seek. Therefore, when Ms Atkins put a view to you, it should be said that Parliament has not reached a decision on this at the moment. Do you recognise there is, however, a much divided opinion among the public and certainly in Parliament over what the Home Secretary is intending to ask Parliament to approve?

Dr House: Absolutely we acknowledge that and that it is not a settled decision in the UK. One of the important contextual things to note is that the UK Government is taking a leading role in modernising surveillance laws for the 21st century. Like most other countries, the surveillance laws here have not been updated since most people had access to the internet as they were walking around, so it is right that the modernisation of these laws be looked at.

Simon Milner: Dr House puts it very well; I could not put it better. I would say that I have responsibility for Facebook in a number of countries, including the Middle East, Israel, Turkey. I really hope that the UK gets this right because I think if it does it could set an important benchmark for many other countries that I operate in. I am always asked about what is happening in the UK and people are looking to this Parliament. It is not just about the safety of 60 million people in the UK. It could have ramifications right across the world, frankly.

Chair: Sure. Mr Pickles?

Nick Pickles: I think that is absolutely right. The international precedent this Bill will set is worth bearing in mind when considering it. We have been grateful as an industry for dialogue with the Home Office about the substance of it, and we do look forward to hearing the Committee's work to take forward this important Bill.

Q1067 Mr Winnick: There are cynical people in this world. The Chair in the beginning said we are not involved in matters concerning tax, or at least we are not concerned when we are sitting around here. Some of us are very, very concerned about your tax position when we are in the Chamber itself, but we are not involved with it this afternoon in the Home Affairs Committee.

Chair: Indeed.

Mr Winnick: However, as I have said, there are cynical people and I have seen a report in the newspaper that says, in effect, that because of the controversy over tax affairs and the fact you are very much on the defensive—and some would say so are Ministers—it is going to be said that you will come to some sweetheart deal over what the Home Secretary is intending, which many of us would describe as a snooper's Bill, in order to minimise the embarrassment your three companies are facing over tax. Indeed, the Chair of this Committee, if I may be so bold as to quote you, said that you would be very wise to work very closely with the Government on the powers she wants. He was speaking, as he has every right to speak, as a Member of Parliament, not on behalf of this Committee. We have not reached a decision. What do you say to that cynical view that because of the embarrassment that you are suffering as companies over tax matters you will make some sort of deal with the Government, despite what you said just a moment ago?

Chair: Very quickly, we do not want to concentrate on tax, but do you regard the Home Secretary as your sweetheart, Dr House?

Dr House: Certainly not. I would simply say each of these policy matters is serious and worth serious consideration and at least in my mind and in the mind of the team I work with at Google there is no bleed-over. We need to have all of these conversations.

Simon Milner: I think one is a matter of policy, and that is legislation that is not yet set, and one is a matter about the application of legislation. Completely different teams deal with it in our company and there is no discussion between them about the matters you described.

Nick Pickles: I think if you read our submission to the Joint Committee it is very clear that we have ambitions that the Bill can be made better.

Mr Winnick: No sweetheart deals then on this issue?

Q1068 Chair: No. I think we have the answer. Just on the issue of instant messaging apps, is one of the concerns that you all had, together with Yahoo and Microsoft, that the legislation that is currently written could ban the use of these instant messaging services because of their end-to-end encryption? Is that one of the concerns that has been raised?

Simon Milner: There is certainly an issue around clarity as to what the provisions of the draft Bill entail in respect of the issue of encryption, but I would not suggest that we are concerned that certain services will, therefore, be banned. As with all matters of legislation, and you know this much better than we do, having certainty about what this actually means is extremely important.

Q1069 Mr Jayawardena: Dr House, I wonder if I could first ask you one question before broadening it out to your colleagues. We have heard a lot in the press about the so-called Islamic State's effective use of social media, yet Jared Cohen of Google has deemed them, "Not a tech savvy organisation". How much of their success, if we can put it like that, do you attribute to their use of social media?

Dr House: I am afraid the success or otherwise of Islamic State outside the use of our platforms is beyond my level of expertise. I would say that we are extremely effective at removing both videos and accounts that are created by foreign terrorist groups and that we are extremely effective at removing re-uploads of those videos after they have been removed.

Q1070 Mr Jayawardena: To take those videos, YouTube being a form of social media, do you believe that some of the success that these terrorists have had is based on their use of your platform? How much would you say that your platform has been used to lever new supporters into this satanic state?

Dr House: It is a constant cat-and-mouse game, as with any form of abuse of our services, but it is one that we are well equipped to meet.

Q1071 Mr Jayawardena: Are you working with the Government or any community or youth-based organisations to provide an online alternative narrative?

Dr House: Absolutely, and that is something that we have not really talked about yet today. We have mentioned several times that there is a zero tolerance policy, and we should get the bad stuff down, but it is also extremely important that people are able to find good information, that when people are feeling isolated they go online and find a community of hope, not a community of harm. We have worked, as I mentioned before, with the Home Office, and with this Committee, and that has been a model for our work on counter-narratives around the world.

Q1072 Mr Jayawardena: Do you have any examples of some of the work you have done?

Dr House: Yes, one of the primary examples would be "Abdullah-X", which was a video series that we launched together with the European Union in 2013, which is a formerly radicalised man who appears in cartoon form and uses humour and the types of language that the people at risk of being radicalised connect with to draw them away from ideologies of terror.

Q1073 Mr Jayawardena: How many people did that reach?

Dr House: I do not have the number to hand but I could write to you and provide it. It is worth saying, and I have said this a couple of times before, that this isn't done, right? We are constantly looking at new ways to make sure that this is more effective. This year, we are running two pilot programmes. One is to make sure that these types of videos are more discoverable on YouTube. The other one is to make sure that when people put potentially damaging search terms into our search engine they also find this counter-narrative work.

Q1074 Mr Jayawardena: Thank you. Mr Milner?

Simon Milner: Yes, we work with a number of organisations. I mentioned Imams Online earlier. In my home city of Bradford recently we took part in a training programme. I think Mr Pickles was there as well in the fine Cedar Court Hotel. I also want to emphasise this is not just about radicalisation of young Muslims. We also were concerned about extremist speech that is directed at Muslims. We have done some work with Tell MAMA, which is the major UK hotline for Islamophobic hate crime, to help ensure that it makes the best use of our platform to let people know that it exists, and also with the Community Security Trust, who are focused on anti-Semitic hate crime. A lot of focus is on radicalisation and the young Muslim community and absolutely we are looking to see what we can do there, but our OCCI initiative I announced earlier goes right across the spectrum and we want to have partnerships across the piece.

Nick Pickles: Just to follow on from that, I was in Belfast a few weeks ago with the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building, and one of the challenges is not just to focus on one type of extremism, but to look at broader social issues. What we did there was try to help community organisations and the Police Service of Northern Ireland to themselves come up with the most pressing issues. The important thing is while our companies can help with expertise, we are not the messengers and the people who are the most credible messengers are these community groups.

Q1075 Mr Jayawardena: What more do you think we could all together be doing to create a more credible, positive message, working with communities, using the tools at the disposal of the state and, indeed, working with businesses who manage these platforms to provide alternatives to young people and make sure that their perhaps misguided views are addressed as swiftly as possible?

Nick Pickles: Just looking at some quotes, Melanie Smith from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue raised the question: can we use women who have returned from Syria as messengers to talk about what has happened there? I think that is a good question. Also, the role of Government communicating, and international aid work to communities—I think that there are different messengers for different communities. Our hope is that we can have more of them in every environment and that is why we work with the Active Change Foundation in Walthamstow right across to Belfast, to Bradford, to Scotland. It is a full spectrum approach.

Simon Milner: I would say that one of the things Government need to recognise, and perhaps you when you are interrogating Ministers, the need not always to beat up on Ministers as to why they are not doing more in terms of the voice of Government. The voice of Government does not work. It just does not work when it comes to counter-speech. Use research about what does work. Talk with Demos, talk with the ISD, talk with Peter Neumann and his team, and then use that. I am sure you always want to be evidence-based in your questioning, but use that to interrogate things like the Prevent strategy rather than just assuming that more money equals more effective.

Dr House: I do not have anything other than what my colleagues have said.

Chair: I am sorry, I missed that.

Dr House: I do not have anything new other than what my colleagues have raised.

Q1076 Mr Jayawardena: Could I make one final request, Mr Milner and Mr Pickles? Dr House said that he would provide us with some further information on the number of people reached and, therefore, helped, we hope, by the resources that Google has deployed. I would be grateful if you would do the same with some of the examples you have talked about.

Simon Milner: We can follow up and write to you.

Mr Jayawardena: Thank you.

Q1077 Chair: Before I come to your fellow Bradford citizen Naz Shah, on the issue of diversity in your organisation, one of the key features of trying to deal with the Daesh narrative is to have Arabic speakers and those from the community. What kind of numbers do you have, Mr Pickles? In your group of 100, how many would be either Arabic speakers or those who know and understand the community because, obviously, you and I may not do so?

Nick Pickles: No, and to reiterate it is more than 100. That is not an absolute figure. There is expertise from across the company. We absolutely have local language specialists looking at this—

Chair: I am talking about the 100. How many would be Arabic speakers?

Nick Pickles: I do not have that number to hand. I can investigate if it is possible. Across the company, we have a whole range of language support operating in multiple time zones, so they can address Indonesia as well.

Simon Milner: You would be very welcome to come and meet them. Some of them are based in our Dublin office, the Arabic-speaking team from a number of countries across the Middle East and North Africa. We do not publish a number of how many they are but, believe me, this is an area of strong investment.

Dr House: We have said publicly that we are actively recruiting Arabic speakers to increase the effectiveness of this team and this is the same as when we see other new threats. When we see revenge porn, for example, we hire experts in that who understand the types of harm but also understand what types of solutions are appropriate.

Q1078 Naz Shah: A quick question: when you talked about removing videos—you can remove them and you make sure they do not come back up—are you tracing right back to the IP addresses or is it just the accounts?

Dr House: I would rather not go into the technical specificity so that people cannot figure out how to outwit our systems. Abuse of our systems is something that we have been familiar with since our inception as a company including getting people who are trying to commit, for example, basic financial fraud and preventing them from creating new accounts or being able to engage with our systems again. It is about similar lessons to the other technical challenges of abuse of our systems.

Q1079 Naz Shah: While I appreciate you have a flag system, are any of you specific in talking about terrorism? For example, on Twitter, I know that I took lots of Twitter trolling from accounts when I was going for the election, and the amount of time it took me to get even one account removed was absolutely appalling. It took me days, if not weeks, to have them removed because the process that you have to go through, you are jumping through hoops and you are having to go back to a screen. It is not just a sequential order so that you can report something. Have you improved that in the last year, particularly Twitter, and how long on average does it take you to remove an account?

Nick Pickles: Absolutely. This is an area where we are always trying to strike a balance between making things simple for users and not increasing the number of reports in our system so that it slows down our response. We have absolutely invested in how we can make that quicker. I am sorry to hear of that experience. We do not have an average takedown because we try to focus on the most pressing cases. We will focus on violent threats and direct threats of violence before we will focus on offensive content, for example. We try to get through everything as fast as we can.

Q1080 Naz Shah: Coming back to terrorism then, do you have something that is specific about, “This is terrorist material” so you prioritise it? To me, that would be higher up my agenda in terms of priority. How do you prioritise it?

Nick Pickles: For law enforcement, for example, and NGOs we have a specific form to report that kind of content through. For users we do not, and this is again one of the areas we keep under review in making sure that we are striking a balance. One of the challenges that we all have is whenever we provide users with controls, often they are used for people to try to get content taken down they disagree with. That is a challenge because it increases the number of reports that are inaccurate in our areas.

Q1081 Naz Shah: The Jihadi net mums that the Chair—

Chair: Mumsnet for Jihadists.

Naz Shah: These kinds of accounts, if they are just user accounts you cannot remove them?

Nick Pickles: If they break our terms of service we will absolutely remove them and we will aim to remove them as quickly as possible.

Q1082 Chair: Have you looked at that organisation?

Nick Pickles: It is not one I am familiar with but I will do following this appearance.

Q1083 Chair: Okay, but it is that kind of information you expect the public to give you rather than your 100 people beavering away in Dublin or wherever they are?

Nick Pickles: The benefits of being a public platform and having large user bases is that users do report those accounts to us.

Q1084 Chair: The point Naz Shah is making, which has been echoed by other people, is it takes too long for Twitter to act. She is not saying that you all do not act, it just takes too long to act. What are you doing about speeding that process up?

Nick Pickles: The reason why the figure 100 came into the public domain was because we tripled the size of the team working on things. We have already invested in the people. We continue to do so. We continue to invest in technology to help us find things. To follow Dr House, one of our challenges was how you stop people recreating accounts when you have suspended them. We started asking people for a mobile phone number to stop accounts with the same number coming back. We can use technology from other areas like spam to stop these accounts coming back, but it is an area we will continue to invest in.

Q1085 Naz Shah: In terms of what you were talking about, particularly Simon, you were talking about working with Tell MAMA and other organisations. What I feel is coming across here is very much like a denial of responsibility and passing it back, which I struggle with. Aside from working with people that are already there, what are you doing as initiatives, you as social media, given your corporate social responsibility that my colleague earlier touched on? What are you doing in trying to invest in this area? Because I am not comfortable with what I have heard today.

Simon Milner: Ms Shah, I am sorry you feel like that and I would be very happy to follow up with you afterwards if you think there are some things that we could perhaps help with in your constituency. Just to be clear, we take this issue incredibly seriously in terms of what is happening on our platform. We are investing in it. We are making sure our reporting is effective. We are making sure we have the right kind of relationship, for instance, with the CTIRU in the Home Office, who can also flag cases to us very quickly. We recognise from the research that others have done that people do not typically just get radicalised online. It is a combination of in person and online contact. Working with community-based organisations like Imams Online, who can understand the context of what is happening with young people in their communities, so that they can address the online bit or the Facebook bit of what is happening in their community is something that we can help them with.

Chair: Indeed. Ms Shah, before you came in the companies set out their strategy, but we will write to them again. I think Ms Shah has raised some very important points. Perhaps you could write to us again specifically on the points that she has raised. I think that would be very helpful.

Simon Milner: Absolutely.

Chair: We are running out of time, colleagues. Stuart McDonald first.

Q1086 Stuart C. McDonald: Yes, I will be as quick as I can. Dr House, could you say very briefly what the trusted flagger programme is that applies to YouTube?

Dr House: Yes, absolutely. One of the challenges we have is despite having a billion users they might not understand how to flag effectively. The example that always comes to my mind is that our most flagged video ever is a Justin Bieber video simply because people dislike it. We are confronted with how we increase the number of high-quality flags that we have, so we work with both Government agencies, including the

CTIRU at the Home Office and Europol, but also NGOs to help them understand what our community guidelines are and give them additional tools for flagging. What we have found is that whereas the general public has about a one-third accuracy rate for flagging, these trusted flaggers tend to have around a 90% accuracy rate. It is much easier for us to prioritise their flags and to act quickly on them.

Q1087 Stuart C. McDonald: Is there a way in which you could add some members of the public to that? For example, if there are members of the public who have made four or five flags and they all turn out to be well founded, they then are given greater priority?

Dr House: Yes, we would absolutely consider that.

Q1088 Stuart C. McDonald: Because one of the things I picked up speaking to the young folk in Bradford last week was a frustration that they make flags and yet nothing happens. Is there a similar scheme for Facebook and Twitter?

Simon Milner: We do not have a trusted flagger process in the same way. We do have arrangements with CTIRU and similar organisations in other Governments to flag things to us. We also have relationships with safety organisations who can let us know when they think our normal reporting processes have not worked, as in they think we have come to the wrong judgment about a particular piece of content. On the whole, we want people to use our standard reporting features because when you report from Facebook that report will get to the right person with the right language expertise who is an expert in the issue that you are reporting. It is by far the most effective way of letting us know about a piece of content. Because every report is looked at by an individual, then we can be sure that we are in the vast majority of situations getting those judgments right. Not always, unfortunately. Of course, we would love to be perfect, but we are not.

Q1089 Chair: What are your flags like?

Nick Pickles: We do not have a trusted flagger system but what we do have is, similar to Facebook, a dedicated portal for groups like CTIRU to use. We also have the safety expert organisations to bring things to our attention. They can report directly to us as well. Then, as I say, we have invested in back end. This challenge—the YouTube example is a pertinent one—of people reporting things they do not like and that they disagree with is something that has required a significant amount of investment to try to make some, I think the phrase is “signal to noise ratio”. It is to try to bring out good reports from the ones of people saying, “This is offensive, I don’t like it”. That is where the real value of what has become counter-speech comes in: the response to something that you do not like is not to take it down, it is to challenge it. It is to challenge the idea that underpins that narrative, and that is where we will tackle the underlying social issues that lead to some of the issues we have heard about today.

Q1090 Stuart C. McDonald: Finally, one last question. I was interested to read Google’s head of ideas, Jared Cohen. He was talking about forcing Daesh from the open web and hounding them from the traditional web. Given the scale of the money and organisation that goes into peddling Daesh views and extremism, is that realistic? What does success look

like here? Is it possible to drive them from the web? How do we monitor success or how do we know that you guys are getting it right?

Simon Milner: This is not something where we would expect to be able to make our judgment. We rely on others, and if you read the reports from the Quilliam Foundation or Peter Neumann's team at King's, they will tell you that Facebook has become a hostile place for Daesh. That for us is good news. It does not mean that they do not try; absolutely they will try. We want to share what we have learnt about how we have made Facebook a hostile place with other platforms. There are many more platforms, of course—social media is not just the three companies sitting here—and they are being created all the time. It is understandable that those people who want to use this kind of technology for evil will go to those places where they put less resource into it. They do not come and give evidence to Select Committees anywhere. It is hard to know who they are.

Q1091 James Berry: Daesh is probably mounting the most successful publicity campaign for an evil regime since Goebbels and the Nazis in the 1930s and they are using your platforms to do it. Against that effort by Daesh, your companies have some of the top tech brains in the world and you are some of the most profitable companies in the world. I know that Google, or Alphabet at least, today became the most valuable company in the world. Are you seriously telling this Committee that with all that expertise and with all the power your companies have you cannot do more in the fight against Daesh?

Dr House: I think it is always possible to do more. I have outlined some of the things that we are already looking at this year. Our discussions with the Home Office, our discussions with this Committee, are always good ways for us to understand what more can be done. As I have outlined, we already are doing a lot and this is something that is not new to us. We have been working on this topic for years. I will repeat what Simon said earlier. We do want to be humble about what we are able to do. We cannot solve all of the world's problems, but if we can make our platforms a hostile place for extremism, then we are committed to doing so and we are committed to working with the other platforms who are not here today to make sure that they have the same skills.

Simon Milner: I reject what you are suggesting, that Daesh have been successful because of our platform. Absolutely, that is not the case. We have worked very hard to disrupt what they do in partnership with other organisations also committed to disrupting them, and we will continue to strive to do better. Of course, we can always do more and we are always trying to learn, but I reject the suggestion that we do not care about the issue. That is far from the truth.

Q1092 James Berry: That was not the suggestion. I am sure you could do more, but you may have reasons of principle or cost for not doing more. There is plainly technologically more. Facebook ban nipples and it causes offence to women with breast cancer or to women who are breastfeeding that you have technology that bans pictures of nipples, yet terrorist content from ISIS sometimes seems to get through the net. Why is that?

Simon Milner: Mr Berry, with respect, that is not true. We do allow pictures of breastfeeding and we allow people to post pictures of their mastectomy scars. We do not allow nudity but we do not use technology to find nudity. We rely on human review of reports. There is no technology that spots female nipples.

Q1093 Chair: Mr Pickles, what do you say to Mr Berry?

Nick Pickles: It is a useful point and I absolutely echo it—numerous academics have looked at this question of automating an algorithm to find this content, particularly dealing with text and language. I think that is something that is a distant hope for the future but is incredibly difficult to do now.

Speaking of doing more, as we have heard, we all look to do more. J. M. Berger, who is with the George Washington University programme on extremism—again, these are the people to validate our efforts—published a report last March that said that the IS-supporting social network on Twitter has been significantly constrained by the suspension campaign. I think it is possible to measure success, but we are not the people to be the auditors, if you like. It is for academics to talk about this.

Finally, social media is one part of the ecosystem. There is still face-to-face interaction. There is still the question of territory. Daesh controlling territory is, as recognised by academics, an important part of its propaganda.

Q1094 James Berry: All three of your companies invest a huge amount of money in making yourselves more profitable and in generating more advertising revenue and you have been very successful. You are all very popular in the services you provide. Can you give this Committee an idea of how high up your list of priorities combating ISIS's use of your platforms is?

Chair: Obviously, you have covered this in the earlier evidence that you gave, but just a word is fine.

Dr House: I would just say it is of fundamental importance. We do not want our platform to be an unsafe place and our ongoing success is critical.

Simon Milner: Keeping people safe on Facebook is our number one priority. ISIS is part of that, but it is absolutely not the only extremist organisation or behaviour that we care about.

Nick Pickles: Absolutely this is taken seriously across the top ranks of the company.

Q1095 Mr Umunna: The issue, to pick up what Mr Berry just asked you, is that ultimately if you were to dedicate more resource to taking action and doing more, as Mr Berry has just described, you would probably need to put, to take Twitter's example, more than 100 people on to your team to keep a check on what is happening in relation to 320 million users. Part of your challenge, would you not accept, is that while I do not know the extent to which you sit on your parent and subsidiary company boards, your directors, your strategic management, have a legal obligation to maximise profitability but you also have obligations in respect of public safety? Would you accept you do not always get that right?

Chair: Mr Milner, a quick answer?

Simon Milner: We started the earlier proceedings with the comments about Ms Sandberg and her speech in Berlin recently. That demonstrates the commitment from the

absolute top of our organisation to doing everything we can to continue to make Facebook a hostile place for extremists and anybody wanting to organise terrorism. There is absolute commitment to this. We do not shirk from it. We absolutely want to be held to account and we want to do more in an informed way based on the evidence of what works.

Q1096 Chair: The appointment of Monika Bickert, a former prosecutor, to set up your counter-terrorism squad—for which you will not tell the us the numbers for how many work in it—with officers all over the world—

Simon Milner: Monika has been part of our company for a few years now and she leads our content policy team across the world. She does not actually work in the community operations team where the experts in terrorism are, but she works very closely with them, as I do and as do my policy colleagues from across the world when required. There is an awful lot of cross-functional working and Monika is absolutely at the heart of that.

Q1097 Chair: The announcement she made last Thursday, was that something new or was it just—

Simon Milner: That was an interview with Yahoo News in which she talked about the work that we are doing in this space. I am not aware there was a particular announcement. She did set out perhaps more detail than had been shared previously about what we do.

Q1098 Mr Umunna: This is my final question to Mr Pickles. I have raised the conflict that inevitably there will be between the bottom line and keeping people safe, but I feel duty bound to ask Mr Pickles how he can come at these issues objectively. This is a question, not necessarily a statement of my view, that I think we have to ask you. You were part of a civil liberties and privacy campaign group, Big Brother Watch. What confidence can people have in light of your background and your campaigning activity, which I have nothing against necessarily, that you can approach these issues in an even-handed and objective manner?

Nick Pickles: I have one background; we also employ people who used to work for the FBI. We have a range of backgrounds in the company. It is one of the great things about having a company that shares diverse opinions is these challenging issues, but let me assure you when we see campaigns like “Black Lives Matter” or “You Ain’t No Muslim, Bruv” on our platform, they are the campaigns that give us the greatest sense of pride because they are challenging the issues of the day.

Chair: Thank you. Ms Ghani, a very quick final question.

Q1099 Nusrat Ghani: A very quick question. Just following on from what Mr Umunna and Mr Berry said about making a profit, you talk about all the people that you rely on, and all the different campaigns you work with. Surely the quickest way is reducing the threshold of what levels of abuse people can post on your websites, just looking at your community guidelines. Of course that means having more than 100 people monitoring, or whatever numbers that you have, it means collecting data and that is going to eat in to your profits.

I am aware that you are going to come back and talk about freedom of expression but surely we are talking about safety in community, that trumps that to some degree, and I follow my colleagues' concerns that this is more about making money than making sure your platforms are a safe space?

Chair: Can you give us a quick answer to that?

Simon Milner: Our community guidelines go way beyond the law of the UK or indeed any other country that I am aware of in terms of what we do not allow. So there is speech that is allowed not only in this place but on the streets of the UK that we do not allow in our community because we think it is not part of respectful dialogue.

Dr House: I would simply say I do not think those two things are intentioned. The long term profitability of our platforms is absolutely based on their being safe places.

Nick Pickles: Absolutely, safety is something we see as a core part of our business and we constantly refine our policies to make sure that we can keep people safe and give people greater clarity about, as Simon says, the content that we say is unacceptable.

Q1100 Chair: Gentlemen, thank you for coming in. Do you feel hunted by Parliament over this issue or do you understand why, three years after we published a report on this, we are still concerned about the fact that the internet companies are not doing enough, as has been expressed by questions put by members of this Committee, to deal with Daesh and deal with those who try to propagate terrorism? Do you understand our real concern about this? Dr House?

Dr House: Absolutely. We are obviously doing a lot, there is more we could be doing and the types of threats that we as a society face will continue. So it is an important conversation we are having.

Simon Milner: I am incredibly proud of the things my colleagues do in combating extremism and terrorism and the use of it on our platform. We all want to do more. I would very much welcome the opportunity to introduce you to some of my colleagues who cannot come here and indeed cannot be public figures because of the work that they do. Believe me, this is an incredibly solid community, so if as a result of this hearing you still feel that our companies are not committed to this cause then we need to work harder to convince you.

Nick Pickles : This dialogue is extremely important to inform a policy debate. We have dialogue with Government, with societies—

Chair: It is not a dialogue today, to be frank, it is the Committee asking you questions. We are not in a conversation. We will be producing a report that we hope will help you do your work. I was saying, do you feel hunted by Parliament, or do you understand why we are doing this?

Nick Pickles: Absolutely. This is an issue of critical importance for everybody—parliamentarians, companies—and an opportunity to hear your concerns is invaluable.

Q1101 Chair: You mentioned several times the need for international co-operation. Do you think this is lacking and, very quickly, who should be taking the lead? Should it be the United States, should it be the United Kingdom, should it be the EU? Because there seems to be something happening in our jurisdiction and something completely different happening in other jurisdictions.

Simon Milner: We are seeing some really good examples of co-operation at EU level in terms of the Home Secretary and her colleagues meeting in that forum and our global head of public policy, my boss's boss, came to that meeting to engage with that community.

Recently the UK Government held a joint forum with Minister Gergawi from the United Arab Emirates and several representatives from that community.

Chair: So from forums, not one particular forum.

Simon Milner: So from different forums, and it is all about sharing best practice.

Q1102 Chair: And is that your view, Dr House, that it is different forums and not one particular organisation taking the lead? That is why people are not able to make sure that these particular laws are all working in the same direction?

Dr House: I think every forum is a welcome forum. I think the UK Government has shown a significant amount of leadership on this topic but I think there is more that can be done on inter-government co-operation.

Nick Pickles: I spoke at the anti-Daesh coalition meeting that was hosted in London by the FCO, which was an excellent example of bringing everybody together to focus on strategic communications and in the case of surveillance that is—

Q1103 Chair: Yes, but that does not give us an international treaty, a meeting at the Foreign Office does not actually give us an international treaty, does it? Who should be taking the lead?

Nick Pickles: As I say, I think a lead has been taken on surveillance, a legal framework is necessary. In other areas it is co-operation and dialogue and sharing best practice. I know I and colleagues around the world have been attending many meetings on this issue and we will continue to do so.

Chair: Thank you so much for coming in, we are very grateful and we will be writing to you with some follow-up information that members of the Committee have requested. Thank you so much.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Saleha Jaffer**, Director of Families Against Stress and Trauma (FAST), and **Raheel Mohammed**, Director, Maslaha, gave evidence.

Q1104 Chair: Saleha Jaffer, Raheel Mohammed, my apologies for keeping you waiting. I am afraid these things do overrun but we are extremely grateful to you for coming here and for being part of this inquiry that we are holding in to counter-terrorism and the counter-narrative. I think Mr Umunna has a declaration to make.

Mr Umunna: Yes. Just for the record, Chair, Ms Jaffer is a councillor in my constituency and a constituent. She is a Labour councillor, I am proud of her but I feel the need to declare it for the record.

Chair: You are quite right to do so. Thank you very much.

I want to start with both of you. This is as a result of the evidence we have received so far. What do you think, Mr Mohammed, is the tipping point? What turns young British Muslims in particular—because if you look at the profile that certainly seems to be the vast majority of those who go abroad, though there are others from outside the Muslim community who go abroad—from being, in the Prime Minister’s words, law-abiding citizens, the recipient of everything that is good that this country has to offer, and I came here as a first generation immigrant so I know what this country has to offer, into people who suddenly want to leave their parents and go and fight a war and give everything up? What is that tipping point? Help the Committee find that tipping point.

Raheel Mohammed: First of all I would like to say that I am not an expert on radicalisation or in counter-terrorism but we, as an organisation, have been doing lots of work with Muslim communities and it is a cross-over with criminal justice, health, education, gender and equality. So if I can answer that question with a slightly longer answer—

Chair: Well not too long.

Raheel Mohammed: Not too long.

Chair: But your opinion is fine. We are not looking necessarily for the world’s greatest professor and PHD and things. What is your gut feeling on these issues?

Raheel Mohammed: There is probably not just a tipping point. Having listened to some of the sessions and just being involved in this work, one of the things that I find is that people are either seen as a health issue, or an education issue, or an extremism issue and with the work that we have been doing, you cannot disentangle all those different elements. So that is not a very helpful answer but it is probably one that I think is more truthful.

There is an ecosystem of different factors involved and different bodies and different influences and it probably varies from case to case as well, and I think it is something that is in flux.

Q1105 Chair: Saleha Jaffer, your organisation FAST does some very effective work with those who are suffering in this way, and I use the word suffering because it is the

families who try to cope with what has happened. We heard some evidence from the sister of someone who had gone abroad to fight for the Daesh, Konika Dhar, I do not know whether you saw that evidence being given?

Saleha Jaffer: Yes.

Q1106 Chair: Do you think there is a particular point that people cross and therefore nobody can stop them going because that tipping point has been reached, or are we trying to find a template that just simply does not exist?

Saleha Jaffer: The template is not there yet but we are working on it. We have some evidence from working in the community and especially with the families we work with that top of the list, up until now, is foreign policy—young people are not happy with the foreign policy.

The second one that comes to our attention is a lack of communication. Communication has been broken down in families so the older generation and the younger generation are not able to communicate together so that they can get the values from their older generation.

The third one is young people, adolescent minds, they want to show something, they want to be the heroes. They want other peer groups to look up to them and there is a lot of power and heroism as well.

So all these factors come into existence when somebody makes up their mind to go over to fight. When I speak to these people they do not really understand Islam that much. They have no basic knowledge of Islam, they just listen from here and there and they think that it is their duty, but when we probe in to, “What is your duty to Islam or as a Muslim person?”, they do not have any clue, so it is about impressions.

Q1107 Chair: Yes. One of the points that is always made, and has been made in all the years that this Committee has looked at this issue, is that parents should be doing much more, and why the parents are not controlling their children. But the evidence that we have received and conversations that certainly I have had suggest that the parents in many cases are the very last people to know. Is that what you have found?

Saleha Jaffer: That is true, that is 100%. In the cases I have done since 2007—too many referrals to us—90% of the parents had no clue. I am working in Cardiff, I went to Bradford as well not long ago, we have cases all over the country. In Cardiff, and this is public knowledge now so I can say this, the medical student, first son of that family, told his father that he was going to a medical seminar and went to Syria. Two days later he texted his mother to say, “I am in Syria, please pray for me, I may not come back”. So he is still there.

So most of the time when we go and see these families they say, “What have we done wrong?” They beat themselves up so much saying, “What have we done wrong, why did it happen to us?” but they had no clue. There were no telling signs at all it was all happening somewhere. Young people were preparing and after they have gone parents come to know about them.

Q1108 Chair: Mr Mohammed, do you get much support from the Home Office for the work that you are doing? You are obviously doing valuable work in respect of your community organisation, is there any support that you get from any official body?

Raheel Mohammed: No. We have never looked for that support, partly because I think within the communities that I work with having Government support could be quite stigmatising and could potentially lead to a lack of trust as well.

We found it more efficient and quicker to actually work outside of the system to get our stuff produced, whether it is a health resource or a project around raising aspirations for young Muslim women, and then to kind of diffuse that through the system. As a small organisation, getting caught up in a bureaucracy of large Government Departments would not enable us to do our work.

Q1109 Chair: Ms Jaffer, who funds you?

Saleha Jaffer: *We do not get regular funding now. From 2007, for three years, we received funding from the Home Office, OSCT funding, but now we do not get it. But we do work very closely with the Home Office producing lots of campaign films. One of them was launched in July 2013 by the Home Secretary, and that is called, "Families Matter". We showed three families whose children have gone to Syria and one of them was killed, one of them is still there, the other one has come back. So these are the DVDs we produce. We produce quite a number of DVDs from FAST and there are millions of hits on our DVDs on YouTube, and we came to know that some of the Jihadi groups have looked at our DVDs as well. So if we have changed somebody's mind from going to Syria or Iraq that is our achievement, and we do work very closely with the OSCT and Home Office, yes.*

Chair: I should have given you the right of reply when Mr Umunna said what a good councillor you are—you should have had the chance to comment on his performance as an MP, but we will leave that for another day.

Saleha Jaffer: He is my MP so I cannot say a word.

Chair: I am not sure that is a ringing endorsement, I have to say.

Saleha Jaffer: No, no, we work very closely on lots of issues.

Q1110 Mr Jayawardena: As the Chairman says, this Committee is aware that young people are being radicalised while not outwardly showing that that is the case, so I appreciate that this question might be difficult. Are there any trends at all in your work, that have come out, that show that there are behavioural changes that might not be immediately apparent, but that are important for us to know about?

Saleha Jaffer: Yes, there are some signs we could look for. I have put it on my YouTube and internet page as well, on "Families Matter". When they are becoming radicalised, they start challenging their parents and elders for their practice of Islam. They really challenge them, saying, "Why are you doing that? Why are you not doing this?" Their peer group changes, they do not bring their friends to home any more. That is what

the parents say, “We used to see those young people coming into our house, they do not come to our house any more”. When they are on the phone or internet, they close their doors.

Mr Jayawardena: That is very helpful—

Saleha Jaffer: They are not that open. So these are some of the signs we have to look for.

Q1111 Mr Jayawardena: That is very helpful. I guess, in which case, there are actually signs that people need to be made aware of. What more can be done to make sure people are aware of these signs?

Saleha Jaffer: Yes.

Raheel Mohammed: Can I just provide an alternative? That range of behaviour is also quite typical teenage behaviour and you need to be careful not to assume that something that might be an ordinary stropky teenager, who does not want to have anything to do with his parents, or her parents, is suddenly following a line—

Q1112 Mr Jayawardena: But is not quite drastic to cut off all of your friends overnight? Because that is what we have just been told.

Saleha Jaffer: That is what we heard. That is what families said, and then this goes—

Mr Jayawardena: I would argue that is not normal.

Saleha Jaffer: The dress code has changed as well, it seems.

Mr Jayawardena: Yes.

Raheel Mohammed: I would not say that that necessarily means you are going to become extremist or a radical.

Q1113 Mr Jayawardena: Okay. Thank you. So, coming on to points that have been raised, what more can be done to make sure the parents and others are aware that these are potential signs, let’s leave it at that, and to say maybe they should be asking further questions and thinking more carefully about their child’s welfare?

Saleha Jaffer: What I am working on nowadays is to encourage parents to have communication—real, developed communications—with their children. That is the best way forward for me. They have to be their friends, not to tell them off all the time, not to be so judgmental. Try to understand—

Q1114 Mr Jayawardena: To be fair, that was not the question. The question is, how can we make sure they are aware of these signs?

Saleha Jaffer: Unless they communicate with their children, they will not know the signs, and—

Mr Jayawardena: No, my question is, you have said that there is that change of behaviour in terms of friends, dress and so on. How can we make sure that parents know that those are potential signs that they need to be looking out for?

Saleha Jaffer: We have put it on our YouTube, these are the signs. It is all there on the FAST page, and “Families Matter”.

Q1115 Mr Jayawardena: Because the trouble I have is Konika Dhar said that she still would not know who to turn to for help if worried if about a family member being drawn to extremism. So, while I do not doubt the good work you are doing, we still have a problem in this country with people not knowing where to go to get that help, to get the advice, and to find out what to do. So, from your work, what is the problem here?

Saleha Jaffer: The problem is publicity, we do not have the resources to publicise ourselves so much. We do our best. The Home Office is helping us with our internet page, but how long for, we do not know. That is where we say if you have any problems, do contact us, it is publicised there. We have produced a few posters as well, and we have sent them to all the mosques in the country to say if you have any issue you want to talk about, please contact FAST. So we are doing our best, but we could do better.

Q1116 Mr Jayawardena: So is there something more that you think that mosques could do, perhaps?

Saleha Jaffer: My mosque is doing it. You came to our mosque a few times, in our Friday sermons, khutbah, our imam says things. Not every khutbah, but maybe every three months. He talks about extremism and what Muslims’ duties are, where to contact and what to do.

Q1117 Mr Jayawardena: One final question, if I may, Chairman. What factors do you believe make a young person particularly vulnerable to radicalisation? So you have talked about the signs. What do you think are the factors that make young people particularly vulnerable to being radicalised?

Saleha Jaffer: In Tareena’s case, wasn’t it domestic violence? That is what she said just recently when she was arrested. She said she was going through domestic violence, so that could be one of the reasons. There was another reason, misunderstanding of the Islamic studies as well, Islamic faith as well. A lot of people are being brainwashed.

Q1118 Mr Jayawardena: So what makes them vulnerable to being brainwashed?

Saleha Jaffer: Maybe loneliness. Not a lot of support. Unemployment, lower education, poor housing. All these inner-city issues, and lack of support and value in young people.

Raheel Mohammed: I would say that it is probably a number of different factors. If you look at the last census, 400,000 Muslim men left school without any qualifications. There is underachieving in education, high health inequalities. You know we also have, at least from 2001, this constant media representation of Muslim communities, and you have a generation of young Muslims growing up where they are seen in a particular way. I do not think that can be taken out of the mix either. What does that do to a community of people? I do not know if there is any research out there that is looking at the kind of

psychological effects that that might have as well. There is an interview with Hans Blix recently on Al Jazeera, and he said, “ISIL wouldn’t be around if there had not been the war in Iraq”. Young people pick up on these things, they know these things, so all of these factors I think come into play.

Mr Jayawardena: That is helpful, thank you.

Q1119 Mr Winnick: Could it not be the case, in some instances at least—we are talking about very few numbers, fortunately—among the Muslim population of this country who are addicted to this poisonous evil there are those who are, or could be, looking for something that they do not find in everyday life? I ask that because some of the profiles of those who have been involved are people who have led a very Western type of life, in some respects an extreme form, of drinking and gambling and so on and so forth. Then they rediscover their religion, but in a rather warped way. Therefore they are looking for something that otherwise they have not found. Do you think there is anything in that theory? Ms Jaffer?

Saleha Jaffer: Maybe belonging. They may be looking for somewhere they belong to, people value them, respect them as well, give them respect, and they become heroes. It could be that. Because nobody has said that because of one pointer people are becoming radicalised. No research has been done or no answers have been found yet.

Q1120 Victoria Atkins: Mr Mohammed, picking up on something you said at the beginning about Government help sometimes being seen as stigmatising. I just wonder, we have heard this from other witnesses, what is the answer to that? Because we see the good work that FAST is doing, we have heard from organisations like Inspire, and it seems to be that it is a very sad state of affairs if getting rid of funding from the Home Office would cause some people to turn against what is a very well-meaning project, which will protect their families.

Raheel Mohammed: I think the long-term solution for any sort of minority community is to build up its own civil society. The danger of being reliant on Government funding is that Governments change and policies change. What I certainly have seen is very good organisations, small community organisations, who have taken Government money, they become reliant on that pot of funding, and then that money disappears and they disappear.

Q1121 Victoria Atkins: But that is an argument for diversification, isn’t it? Any organisation needs to diversify its sources of income, whether it is a charity or a business. But it is the idea that because the Government is helping a project, that that project is therefore deemed not acceptable.

Raheel Mohammed: If it is associated with something like Prevent, Prevent is seen by many educators that I have spoken to, by people in the community, as being a blunt instrument. And that is not really doing any kind of prevention, really, it is an intervention of sorts. What it is doing is stigmatising whole communities. If you are then associated with a programme like that, it is difficult to create social change on the ground. I remember when we first started setting up Maslaha, one of the first questions I was asked was, “Are you part of the Prevent programme?” Quite openly. I said no, but that is a

question that gets asked. That has been at least since 2007. There has been different incarnations of Prevent as well..

Q1122 Mr Winnick: As far as schools are concerned, do you think that enough is being done by schools to try to detect where there's more than a possibility that some pupil will engage with ISIS, one way or another? Or do you think that is putting too much responsibility on school teachers?

Raheel Mohammed: The teachers that I have spoken to have said that there needs to be a positive curriculum response to the Prevent duty. So there is a duty right now on them to spot signs of vulnerability, of veering towards radicalisation. From what I understand, the hour session that they are given does not include what do those teachers do next week on Monday morning, in a geography lesson, in an RE lesson, in an English lesson? There probably is too much emphasis on teachers. There are good organisations, like School Linking, who are doing work around this, whose attitude is, "The Prevent duty is there, but let us work with it in a positive way" and I think that is missing at the moment. Teachers need help with that.

Q1123 Mr Winnick: Mr Mohammed, this is my final question, because other colleagues obviously want to put their questions to you. You spoke about the number of Muslims unemployed, but it is a fact, is it not, that those who were responsible for 7/7 were pretty well integrated into this country, were not unemployed? That is so, is it not?

Raheel Mohammed: I do not know whether they were integrated. If they—

Mr Winnick: They were certainly employed, or students. They did not seem to be living in deprivation.

Raheel Mohammed: No. No.

Q1124 Mr Winnick: The point is their justification for the slaughter of 52 people was the Iraq war. There were many, many people opposed to the war, as we know, who the last thing they had on their minds was the slaughter of their fellow citizens, so it is more complex than that, isn't it?

Raheel Mohammed: I would argue there must have been other factors involved, whether it is mental health issues, whether it is, like I said, the constant media portrayal, and all of these factors coming to play in one person to do what they do.

Saleha Jaffer: One of them did say that he was employed, but he had seen his friends and colleagues being not employed in his communities. One of them did say that in one of his interviews.

Chair: Ms Jaffer, if you could respond to Victoria Atkins' question, I think that she was—

Victoria Atkins: Oh sorry, no, it was just that Ms Jaffer seemed to want to say something to Mr Winnick—

Saleha Jaffer: About teachers, yes. About the teachers. Yes, it is too big a call for them, because I am working in schools nowadays. They need a lot of training, to detect, and it cannot be just one teacher's responsibility, it has to be co-operative responsibility. It

has to be done co-operatively and they need a lot of training. The theme has to be extended, not just a one-hour session and that is it. If a young person says something, a little sentence, there should not be just cutting him and saying he is radicalised. There has to be background knowledge. They have to probe into history and why they have done it. To me it is too quickly done and there is not a lot of thought behind that.

Chair: Colleagues, we need to be as brisk as possible, starting with Mr Loughton.

Q1125 Tim Loughton: One of the things that came out from our session in Bradford last week was how those young Muslim people do not trust the media. So where do they go to get trusted information and advice?

Also, building on your point, Ms Jaffer, earlier: I was surprised you said there was an intergenerational breakdown, which I think there is in society, although ironically among certainly Asian communities there are probably the strongest intergenerational links still. So where do they get trusted advice and information? Who is influencing them?

Saleha Jaffer: Influence is coming from their peer groups and some of these groups who are brainwashing these young people. They take good influence and advice from schools, teachers and their relations.

Q1126 Tim Loughton: Mr Mohammed, the word “brainwashing” is very interesting. I think it has come up before. What is your view on the influence of media and why some of those kids seem to be more susceptible to brainwashing, peer pressure? Mental illness was also mentioned. That is another interesting aspect.

Raheel Mohammed: After your visit to Bradford I saw there was an article about some of the comments that came out. Reading those comments what struck me, was that I could have heard those comments from young people eight or nine years ago. So I think the mainstream media have not changed that much. I read the evidence from *The Times*’ editor and there was something about trying to employ a Muslim journalist who has knowledge of Islamic affairs. Again, I think I heard that seven or eight years ago. There is such a preponderance of white noise in information that there are few safe spaces where children can just talk freely about events that happen. Teachers have said to us for instance after the attacks in Paris, that they need to create safe spaces within schools where different opinions could be voiced without people feeling afraid. The worry is that might becoming more restrictive and that people feel less confident in being able to express views that people do not agree with.

Q1127 Tim Loughton: Because of Prevent?

Raheel Mohammed: Because of Prevent. A teacher said to me just yesterday that seven years ago there may have been a particular cross-section of Muslim society that might have felt as if they were being targeted. Now it feels like it is also the middle-class family, who is doing okay, who also feel that they have to think about where they go on holiday, and think about what it means if one of their daughters decides to wear the hijab. I think that is a worry. That is a real fear. We had an event at Rich Mix—it is an arts centre in East London—and we used an exhibition we have produced a few years ago to explore the idea of dissent, and being a really strong British family. We also wanted to discuss Prevent quite openly and we had some teachers and students there. The thing that I was

struck by was the fear within the audience of speaking quite openly and challenging it. A couple of people said to me, “Please don’t quote me on Twitter”. That is quite frightening, I think.

Q1128 Stuart C. McDonald: We have heard a lot of evidence, some today and also last week in Bradford, about the significance and indeed prevalence of extremist propaganda on the internet. The young people I was speaking to in Bradford last week, they had all seen some extremist material, maybe appearing in a Facebook feed or wherever. They would all have the wherewithal to either ignore or even to report that but how do we ensure that all young people have those skills because we are not going to get rid of all this material overnight by any stretch of the imagination? So how do we make sure young people are able to deal with seeing such material?

Raheel Mohammed: I think it is the development of the whole child and it comes back to school again. If room is given within subjects like RE, English, History, to explore what propaganda means and look at historical examples, you are developing children who can be critical rather than just accepting whatever they see. In that way it is a far more positive approach and it is also within the rhythm of the school. The positive benefits of that are wide-ranging and do not just affect whether or not they are going to see extremist information and be affected by that.

There is an interesting article by a former British Council director. He was writing about what was the common factor among Jihadis in the Middle East and North Africa. He is putting forward the hypothesis that because they had all studied science subjects there was less critical thinking and whether or not studying the social sciences, the arts and English might have had an effect. I think there is something about having that critical thinking and it should not just be focused on Muslims and extremism, just what we are facing now, because in 15, 20 years’ time there will be something else and it is about creating a generation of young people who can be critical.

Saleha Jaffer: Also young people should be given the opportunity to openly discuss what is Prevent. What is this difference? Nowadays people are so, so frightened they do not even want to discuss it; they ignore the whole issue. There should be some debate. Let the young people discuss that openly in a healthy environment with some advisers around them so that they understand properly rather than just listening to someone and believing them. They need to have the opportunity to understand and then know what is wrong and what is right. We are not giving that opportunity to young people anymore.

Q1129 Naz Shah: Am I right in understanding that you did some work around Trojan Horse or post-Trojan Horse in Birmingham? Or have I got the wrong end of the stick?

Raheel Mohammed: No, just that exhibition I was talking about.

Q1130 Naz Shah: You talked about your concerns about lack of depth, and your concern about recommendations that would be the same as those of previous years—this is post-Paris—that they lacked depth and were firmly fixed in silos. Could you expand on that?

Raheel Mohammed: Yes. If I take our work in criminal justice for instance, a few years ago we created a resource around depression. This was commissioned and it was for

GPs and therapists in communities. There is no direct translation for the word “depression” into Urdu, Arabic, Bengali, Sylheti, Punjabi. We know from speaking to young people that there is probably quite a large number of young people in the criminal justice system who have undiagnosed mental health issues. I think people are too often seen as being a criminal justice problem and the mental health issues might be ignored; all the issues around underachieving in education; what was going wrong at ages 11 and 12 that led them down the path that might have ended in prison. The mayor of New York recently appointed a criminal justice team and they are looking at, in 2014-15, 55,000 students who were suspended from public schools, and one in four of those were black. They are looking at that with a view to what that might mean for the criminal justice system. That does not tend to happen. I think people just tend to work in—that is what I meant by silo, if that makes sense.

Q1131 Naz Shah: Your criticism of Prevent and your concerns around Prevent: can you just define that? Can you please explain to this Committee what you mean by schools not being prepared or not enough training for all schools to fully understand and implement the duty?

Raheel Mohammed: Again, just speaking to teachers, teachers have said they have had somebody come in, they spoke to them for about an hour, but on Monday morning what does that mean in terms of the curriculum? I do not necessarily mean just in terms of subjects but also the whole school environment: what happens during break time and lunchtime. There is not enough training given to that. I would argue that I do not know if it is a prevention programme; it is more of an intervention. For me a prevention programme would be about saying, “We are worried about young children not being able to decipher terrorist information, can we run a project in English or History that looks at propaganda from World War II?” That would make sense. But just saying this is the list of vulnerabilities that we have to look out for I think is just swamping teachers, who do not feel confident about this.

The other thing I would say is this. I know there have been a few cases of children being interviewed after perhaps saying the word “terraced” and people thought it was “terrorist”. The knock-on effect on those communities will last. We need to be cognisant of that. It is not just a one-off incident. That response reverberates throughout communities and because everything is online it travels.

Q1132 Mr Umunna: Three very quick questions. Not directly on the evidence that we have just taken from the social media companies—because I appreciate you both were not here for the duration of the evidence—I have just one quick question. We have just heard from Twitter, Facebook and Google but of course there are others. Do you believe that the social media companies are doing enough to help counter the radicalisation of our young people? You don’t need to give a long answer.

Saleha Jaffer: To my knowledge people I have met with, have become radicalised because of the internet. That is where they got the information. That says a lot. If these social media people were responsible, were taking into consideration their duties towards communities, they would have done something. That is all I want to say.

Raheel Mohammed: When we work on a project we work with a number of different actors. If it is a health project it would be therapists, imams, doctors, patients, artists. So it is not just their responsibility. They are part of an ecosystem. I am not surprised they do not necessarily know how to tackle those issues. It is not what they are trained to do. It is not what they do every day.

Q1133 Mr Umunna: Do you think they could do more?

Raheel Mohammed: They could do more but with a group of people and I think they need a steer from whatever that group of people looks like.

Q1134 Mr Umunna: Okay. Secondly, can I ask you about some other evidence that we took from Konika Dhar, Siddhartha Dhar's sister? Before she gave evidence to us she wrote a very moving piece in *The Sunday Times* in May of 2015 where she basically said that she felt a sense of guilt for what had happened to her brother and how he had ended up getting involved in what he is alleged to have got involved with. But then when she gave evidence to us she was not in a place where she could concede, if you like—that is probably the wrong word but I think you get my gist—that he had actually done the things that he had done. The interesting thing going to what Ms Jaffer just talked of was the fact that many of the families involved here simply do not see, or were not aware of, what was happening.

My question to both of you—and this is not my view so I want it to be taken as a question—is do you think in part why families have found this so hard to deal with is because it is very difficult to accept what it means to see what is happening, or to admit what has happened, to their young people? With Ms Dhar, for example, for her to say what we have seen happened was happening under her nose, it is a very hard thing to accept, is it not?

Saleha Jaffer: It is. It is denial, really, yes. There is some denial there but people are coming to accept that. I am working with families and they are accepting that. But as you said, it is difficult to start with, to accept what is going to happen and they do not think that their children can do this. They are brought up as such that they cannot. I worked with someone in Brighton—her three sons have been killed now—and she still says, “How come they did this? How come?” She has not accepted that they have been killed, that they have done all that, that they have gone to Syria. She is still does not accept that.

Chair: Indeed. I think we saw the husband of this particular woman on television saying similar things.

Mr Umunna: Yes.

Chair: Raheel Mohammed, a very quick answer to Mr Umunna.

Raheel Mohammed: I saw some of the evidence and it was a very difficult thing to watch her giving evidence.

Mr Umunna: Yes, it was. It was a difficult session.

Raheel Mohammed: I can't begin to imagine what she must have gone through either. I think you said that she needs some sort of support as well.

Chair: Indeed. Thank you.

Q1135 Nusrat Ghani: There was some recent research that showed that 90% to 95% of people who have been radicalised are radicalised by friends. Ms Jaffer, you mentioned this as well, that youngsters are often radicalised by friends so we need to get to them much earlier on at school. At the same time, you gave some evidence to say that school is not the right place to look out for these signs, which then contradicts the fact you also mentioned that having good role models in schools is a good thing. I would argue that just as teachers have to be looking out for kids being groomed for a number of other things—child exploitation or whatever—asking them to look out to make sure that these kids are not also being groomed to become radicalised is not a big ask. I do appreciate that you believe that the Prevent work in this area has to be much deeper and go further. They need more than one hour's work, for example.

Saleha Jaffer: I do agree that schools can play a very vital part in stopping people from becoming radicalised, but they need correct and direct training.

Nusrat Ghani: They just need more training than at the moment.

Saleha Jaffer: More training. They have to be equipped with the tools.

Q1136 Nusrat Ghani: It is not a criticism of the Prevent strategy. It is good work that the Government are doing. They just have to look at it and do it better?

Saleha Jaffer: They have to do it better. I am not just saying it is wrong.

Raheel Mohammed: I don't think the Prevent strategy is working at the moment.

Nusrat Ghani: Even with helping teachers to look out for signs?

Raheel Mohammed: It is not helping teachers. I don't think what is happening in schools right now would necessarily help a teacher in any greater way to be able to spot signs of extremism or radicalisation. It is just creating an atmosphere of fear. I think the longer term strategy would be, as I said, to develop a more positive school environment that is able to debate some of these really difficult, complex issues in a very safe, open way, rather than what I feel is happening right now, which is constricting the atmosphere.

Q1137 Nusrat Ghani: That is what you would hope teachers would be doing in schools, having open discussions about what it means to be living in a particular community, what aspirations young boys and girls should have, what are their parents faith is compared to the faith that is being promoted by Daesh. That alludes back to your conversation about parents not being able to communicate with their children because their children are not practising the faith that they have practised for generations; it is a much more extreme, conservative form. It is difficult to have that communication with your children as well, isn't it?

Saleha Jaffer: It is not just on the religion. It is on every aspect of life that young people are not communicating, in any other society as well as Muslim societies. There is the problem of language values as well. Young people in south Asian and other

communities brought up here speak only English and the parents may not know English and they don't communicate with each other, so there is that gap as well. When I go into families, they say, "Mum, you don't know much about these things".

Chair: As all teenage children say to their parents.

Saleha Jaffer: They all say that.

Q1138 Chair: Thank you for that. Let's end with a question relating to the Konika Dhar evidence session. Following that, I wrote to the Home Secretary asking whether specialist support could be provided to families like the Dhar family and the Home Secretary wrote back to say that there are specialist officers involved in CT who are trained to do this kind of work. It would be better, would it not, for organisations like yourselves to be asked to go and see families, to counsel them and to make sure that they were dealing with this incredibly difficult situation? Would you be ready to do that if you were asked to do that? I accept that you don't want to take money from the Government because you want to be independent—at least one of you doesn't want to take money from the Government, Mr Mohammed doesn't want to—but if you were called upon to be part of that process where it is community-trained people rather than CT officers going in to help families, do you think that is something you would be up for?

Raheel Mohammed: We have created a resource around depression. That is being used across the country but it was made with the user, the service provider, an imam if necessary and other community organisations. So, could we do it? Yes, we could do it.

Saleha Jaffer: I do agree that we are the ones who can go and talk to people because if CT officers go they don't open up at all. They would not tell them everything. We go as community members and they speak to us, they open up. We know their issues and we can help them out. I am doing a lot of work with so many families and it helps. We have an Islamic scholar in our project. She is a woman and she can sit down with them and say, "Where does it say jihad means going and killing them?"

Q1139 Chair: One final question: the telephone line that people have to ring is called the anti-terrorism hotline. In our last report we suggested that this should be renamed because we didn't think parents want to ring up the anti-terrorism hotline. What do you think?

Saleha Jaffer: No. Please rename that.

Raheel Mohammed: No, I don't think that is going to work.

Q1140 Chair: There could be a resource run by the community with properly trained people who could help people through this situation, that is not part of government, that is semi-detached?

Raheel Mohammed: Yes. I would say that you need to have a range of different stakeholders involved in making that happen. Can I say one more thing? I think it would be very interesting to do a review of Prevent in schools right now. It wouldn't take that long to interview a range of teachers across the country and say, "What has worked, what hasn't, and what needs to be improved?" That would probably be quite an efficient use of anybody's money.

Chair: That is a very interesting suggestion, which we will look at. Mr Mohammed and Ms Jaffer, thank you very much for coming in today.