



HOUSE OF LORDS

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Questions 1 - 17

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Witnesses: Will Gardner and John Carr OBE

Dr Dickon Bevington, Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones and Dr Angharad Rudkin

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on
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Members present

Lord Best (Chairman)
 Lord Allen of Kensington
 Baroness Benjamin
 Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury
 Earl of Caithness
 Bishop of Chelmsford
 Baroness Kidron
 Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall
 Baroness Quin
 Lord Sheikh
 Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury

Examination of Witnesses

Will Gardner, CEO, Childnet International, and **John Carr OBE**, Secretary, UK Children's Charities' Coalition on Internet Safety

Q1 The Chairman: I welcome you both; thank you very much for joining us. Before we get into questions, perhaps you could introduce yourselves to us and tell us a little about your background so that it goes on the record formally. John, would you go first?

John Carr: I am John Carr. I am secretary of something called the Children's Charities' Coalition on Internet Safety, which is an alliance of all the big, professional children's charities, such as the NSPCC, Barnardo's, the Children's Society and so on. Essentially, we monitor policies impacting on children's use of digital technologies with a view to seeking their improvement or betterment, which means we talk a lot to the industry as well as to several different parts of government, Parliament of course, and the media.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

Will Gardner: I am Will Gardner. I am the CEO of Childnet International, which is a children's charity. It is 20 years old, and its mission is to help make the internet a great and safe place for children. We work in schools; we have a team that goes out to schools across the country, talking to children and young people, parents and carers, and staff. We speak to young people from the age range of three up to 18, with the goal of giving young people the skills to use this amazing technology safely and responsibly. We develop educational materials, which we put online for free for schools and others to access so they can also help support young people in this space.

We work on the policy side too, and with John and Sonia we are members of the UKCCIS executive board. We work collaboratively with industry, charities and other sectors to pursue

this mission. We also form part of the UK's Safer Internet Centre, which is a part-EU-funded project, which brings together the Internet Watch Foundation as a hotline, the South West Grid for Learning as a helpline for professionals working with children and ourselves as an awareness centre, and we organise Safer Internet Day in the UK.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. The first question is from Lord Sherbourne.

Q2 Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: Drawing on your practical experience, which is a big advantage to the Committee, and from what you have seen and the work you have done, we know there are lots of advantages and benefits of the internet for children in the different age groups that you cover, and we know there are a lot of risks. Focusing on the risk at the moment, what do you think are the greatest risks that young people face with the internet?

Will Gardner: There are different ways of answering that question. First, what is the one that young people are most worried about and are perhaps most likely to come across? If you were talking to young people, they would pick up cyberbullying. Their peer group is the one that they would be most worried about. They are worried about mean comments online and content that they see online that is upsetting. These are things that they would highlight. Clearly, the risks are broader than that, and the ones that are perhaps not as common, just as the very common ones, can be just as harmful in certain circumstances, such as grooming, sexual exploitation, online reputational damage and so on. There is a wide range of potential risks, and the challenge for us, without going too far away from the question, is that we have to recognise that there are risks and, as Tanya Byron did in a review a few years ago, recognise that we cannot always remove those risks. We have to give young people the skills to manage the risks as best they can.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: As a follow-up to that, what is your assessment of their sense of awareness of these risks?

Will Gardner: It varies from age to age, but in the work that we have done in primary schools and in secondary schools I think young people are aware of risks. It does not always mean they act responsibly and safely while they are using technology, but there is a general awareness of internet safety. There has been a lot of work done in schools over a large number of years, and it is a question of trying to drive that awareness into behaviour change, which is the challenge that we face.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: Is there anything, Mr Carr, you would like to add to that?

John Carr: Empirically, there is no doubt that bullying and online harassment of various kinds is, without question, the issue that most children and young people would mention at the top of their list in terms of behavioural issues. In relation to content, Professor Livingstone

is sitting up there, so I am sure she will correct me if I have got this wrong, but, in the study that she did on EU Kids Online, the class of content that most people mention most frequently that they found upsetting was pornographic material, broadly agreeing with what Will has just said.

The Chairman: To get the balance right, could you also say what you see as the greatest benefits of the internet for children?

John Carr: The benefits are immense. It has completely transformed the way in which children can access cultural, educational and sporting information. Every type of information is there at their fingertips. Sadly, in my day, we had to go to libraries and get out books and stuff like that. I am not saying that was a bad thing to do, but it is just so much easier and there is a richness of material available to young people.

The Chairman: Is that what young people identify as the great advantage—not going to the library?

John Carr: My guess would be that most young people would rate the interactive components No. 1—the way in which they can stay in touch with their friends, keep up to date with what is happening in their crowd at school, their sports team and their favourite band. In terms of the broader picture, there is no doubt at all that all those other factors are there.

Will Gardner: I would agree with that. Educationally, it is a very important element for young people. New technology brings huge benefits for discovering, exploring and so on. It has become part of the social lives of young people. It is very integrated into that, and there is pressure on young people as they get older to be interacting within these environments. It can be a great advantage to communicate in groups in that way. It is also a great source of support and advice even for young people for a range of different topics with information that they might not want to ask trusted adults about; it can be a source of information and help in certain circumstances too. There is a nice cartoon from about 10 years ago that summed it up saying, “What is the greatest risk about the internet?” It is that we forget about the benefits and we focus on the negatives, and it is really important that this part of the conversation has its weight in here.

The Chairman: Absolutely. Can I remind colleagues, before they ask a question, to declare any interests that they may have?

Q3 Baroness Quin: Obviously, children can experience bullying not online—offline—and may get access to pornographic material and so on. How would you describe the difference between the risks online and those offline for children?

Will Gardner: With different issues, it might have different impacts. With bullying, one of the messages we give out to schools is that cyberbullying is bullying; it is a behavioural thing, and the answer will very much lie in the relationships between the individuals involved. One of the things is not to get too drawn into the technical elements. It is not something for the ICT teacher to sort out. It is very much another type of issue. In relation to cyberbullying, for example, the issues are around the fact that it is 24/7. Even though it is bullying, there are some factors that add to that. If it is humiliating content, the audience can be much larger. There might be anonymity, which can be very distressing for the person who is on the receiving end because they might not know who it is. On the other side, the internet is quite disinhibiting in relation to the cyberbullying topic, where you might say things online that you would not say face to face and you cannot necessarily see the impact of what you are doing on the person with whom you are communicating. That is the bullying angle.

If you go to pornography, if you look at the differences, accidental exposure to pornography online is probably what I would see as one of the biggest differences. The explicitness of the content and the fact that it can be moving, real time and all the rest of it is a big issue. The NSPCC study found very recently that accidental exposure was a big issue facing young people in relation to pornography, and I think that is significant.

Baroness Quin: Would you like to add something?

John Carr: I would. First, I think the word “pornography” is a problem, because for people of a certain age—including my own age, I might say—when you mention the word “pornography”, a great many people still think that you are talking about *Playboy* centrefolds, pictures of ladies dancing without a bra on the beach or something of that kind. They have no idea about the nature of some of the material that is now instantly available on the internet to anybody of any age at the click of a mouse. It is not pornography as we would have understood it in the 1960s or 1970s. Overwhelmingly, it is anti-women violence, although there are other aspects to it, and the idea that any child or young person could ever learn anything of any value or use about sex, relationships or anything of the kind from some of the sites that I have had to look at from time to time is completely absurd. But the word itself has become an obstacle to understanding. I cannot think of a better word. I am trying. I will offer a prize to anybody who can think of a better phrase. You may know that in a related area we have stopped calling child pornography “child pornography”; we now call it “child abuse images”, and that has become fairly well accepted. We have a similar challenge in relation to what historically has been called pornography, because the word no longer conveys in any meaningful way what it is we are discussing on the internet, which is why—I think we will

come on to this later—the Government’s Digital Economy Bill, which contains clauses on age verification, is exceptionally important, because we need to keep this kind of material away from young eyes.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: I would like to go back to the distinction that you made, Mr Gardner, between what children or young people themselves say about what risks they fear or face, and what you would assess those risks as being or what the wider risks might be. We have some stats about how many children accidentally or otherwise encounter what we will continue to call pornography and various other things, but do you have any idea how many young people that you are aware of personally experience bullying behaviour, or whether they are aware of it and fear it because they know about it? What is the incidence, as it were, among young people of actual experience of cyberbullying?

Will Gardner: The numbers for cyberbullying are around 11% to 12%. I think that, last time, Sonia’s research gave a figure of about 12% for young people who have experienced cyberbullying in the last year. The DfE did a big study that came out earlier this year, which gave a figure of about 11%. That is talking about cyberbullying. There is a level below cyberbullying, which includes meanness online that might not have some of the hallmarks that you might apply to bullying, such as repetition or deliberate intent, but nevertheless was upsetting. Those are the kinds of numbers that we are talking about in relation to that.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: If I can pursue this for a minute, beyond that, there are a lot of other young people who are perhaps not themselves experiencing this but are aware of it, presumably because they know people who are.

Will Gardner: Yes.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Does the fact that they know that they could become victims or that other people are victims have any effect on their behaviour—either how they use the internet or on their relationships?

Will Gardner: In a way, we are hoping that there will be that level of awareness about this to try to be a control on young people’s behaviour in relation to others. On a slightly separate note, we looked at online hate for the last Safer Internet Day as a topic about young people’s exposure to hateful messages online, not necessarily directed at them but more broadly. When I say “hateful”, I mean targeting particular groups in our community, whether that is LGBT, young people and so on. Eighty per cent of young people had seen messages that were hateful online, which is very interesting, and that had had an impact on young people’s confidence in engaging in the social media world. I cannot tell you the percentage off the top of my head,

but there was a figure in there that was really interesting. Does that content influence how you interact with social media? You could see that that was a factor there.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: That they felt more ready to engage.

Will Gardner: No. It was almost like a deterrent to engage with social media. They had seen that content out there and that was putting people off expressing themselves how they might want to, for fear of a retaliation not necessarily by people they know, but by the broader online community.

Q4 Baroness Kidron: Unfortunately, I have to do this technical thing of declaring my interests first, so forgive me. I am a founder of 5Rights, which is a campaign to make rights apply equally on and offline. Both in my capacity as an individual and through my company, I work with a broad range of companies and institutions to develop technical tools that improve young people's interaction with internet technologies, and I sit on a number of international and national task forces and commissions that have to do with young people and the internet. My question is actually very short. Would you care to say something on the record about the gender aspect of what you have just said? If they fear to engage, is there a specific piece for young women and young girls?

Will Gardner: That is a very important point to add in. Something that came out of the research from *Net Children Go Mobile* is that girls, broadly speaking, have a worse time online in relation to this area, and that is really important to flag up. It is not exclusive; it is not just about girls; but I think that is very much worth taking into account. Therefore, we need to think about issues relating to body image, peer pressure and other such things, and even think more broadly than that in relation to that particular topic.

Lord Sheikh: We have talked about the risks—bullying, grooming and sexual exploitation. There are some horror stories that we have heard where children who are being bullied have committed suicide. When a child is bullied, how likely are they to bottle it up inside, and how likely are they to talk to a teacher or a parent? If they do talk to a parent or somebody else, what help is available, because bullying can have very dire results?

Will Gardner: That is the big challenge for bullying as well as cyberbullying in relation to that. There are a number of different things we do know. If we ask children, "Who are you most likely to want to talk to about issues affecting you online?", we see that from the primary age through to the early secondary stage parents are No. 1; they would be the first port of call for young people. But when it gets to 13 and 14 year-olds, friends take over as the top people that a young person would want to go and talk to, and parents fall in at No. 2. They are still a significant second all the way through to 18 and remain there. We want to

encourage young people to come forward. We have done some work asking young people about cyberbullying particularly and what the obstacles are to their coming forward and talking to their school about it. There is work that schools can do in relation to this, and schools are doing some work in this space, about encouraging even anonymous reporting. Cyberbullying can enable there to be witnesses in a way that perhaps would not necessarily be the case in offline bullying. There might be opportunities for children themselves or others to talk about something that is happening and for schools to be really clear about what they are going to do once they are told about something. Sometimes children are afraid of losing control and not knowing what is going to happen. Are they going to get into trouble? There is work to be done around this space.

In relation to this, as I said before, cyberbullying is bullying, and there is behaviour between individuals or groups. Schools have a long history of dealing with the issue of bullying from a pastoral perspective in trying to make the situation better. The systems are in place, and we want to encourage schools to recognise that they have knowledge in this, but there are some extra places to which they can turn. If it is on social media, there is reporting to social media to try to help get content taken down, if that is an appropriate way to go. There is a helpline supporting professionals in this space called the Professionals Online Safety Helpline, which we encourage our professionals to go to for advice on particular issues. There are things, absolutely, that schools can do, and there is guidance there. We have just developed some new guidance that we are about to bring out for schools in this space.

Lord Sheikh: Does the child feel that it is their fault? Do they feel like that sometimes?

Will Gardner: It can absolutely be that. You can imagine a situation where a humiliating picture of a child was taken and it is posted and shared. The child could feel embarrassed but also guilty that that is the case, and that could provide a barrier to their coming forward. There might be accusations of, “What were you doing that for?”, or complicity in the picture and so on.

Q5 Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: I want to ask you specifically about how governance and policy should be moulded and developed to address the fact that we are talking about very different age groups. I also wanted to pick up on what Baroness Kidron said about the difference between what happens to boys and girls. My experience with children is this accidental access, which, as you get older, is presumably less of a problem; I do not know if that is the case. There are rather a lot of questions rolled into one major one, which is that you are talking about a very wide-ranging age group here.

John Carr: If I could say something on this question of governance, first, you are absolutely right that you need nuanced and different approaches for different age groups. Broadly speaking, in so far as we have laws around these things, people under the age of 13 are regarded as children, and there would be a whole raft of things that you would expect to apply in respect of them. But between the ages of 13 and 18 they are all lumped together in one chunk, and, again, similar policies would be applied to them. I am not sure that is a very good approach, because between the ages of, essentially, 12 and 18 children do a lot of growing up.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: Is that based on just being teenagers?

John Carr: It is actually based on the American federal law. Most of the social media platforms, and that is essentially what we are talking about in these discussions, are American companies. Under US federal law, they are required to make a distinction between persons below the age of 13 and persons above the age of 13, and then up to 18. At 18, all bets are off. There are no special considerations or special rules that apply to them. Between the ages of 13 and 18—that is between 13 and 17, in other words—there are. Below the age of 13, you should not be on there in the first place.

On that point, as we know, recently the BBC published its research that corresponds very much with what Sonia and Will have done before, which was that 75% of 10, 11 and 12 year-olds in the United Kingdom were on social media platforms that legally were not supposed to have them there, because the legal minimum age for those platforms is 13. By the way, in the Czech Republic, I think the percentage is around 85%. In Cyprus, it is 80%. It is not that Britain's children are uniquely prone to misrepresenting their real age. It is happening pretty much universally, and it is all a product of this US federal law, which set 13 as the bottom limit but did not impose any obligation on the companies to verify the age of people when they applied to join or when they joined up. It is simply sufficient to tick a box to say, "Yes, I am 13", and that is it. The only legal obligation that the companies have after that point is, should they discover that somebody is in fact below the age of 13, they have to kick them off. The companies are allowed to take people under the age of 13 on to their sites, but if they choose to do that they must obtain parental consent. The companies have never wanted to get involved with the trouble, hassle and expense of seeking parental consent; so they simply say, "In that case, you have to be 13 to be a member". This has resulted in massive degrees of non-compliance in the UK and more widely.

On the question of governance, one in three of every internet user on the planet is below the age of 18. In parts of the developing world, it rises to one in two. This is the product of research published by UNICEF and Chatham House; Sonia Livingstone and I were joint

authors of it, along with Jasmina Byrne. Young people are easily the biggest single distinguishable or definable constituent group of internet users. You would not know that if you looked at the internet governance institutions. They are pretty much massively overlooked and disregarded, and it is a fault of governance institutions, fundamentally.

Baroness Kidron: John, can I ask you to unpick a little this point about 13 to 17, because I am not aware of so much work being done in separating out that group. In fact, I would say that “all bets are off” actually starts at the age of 14. You seemed to suggest that there was this group and they had special care, but I am not certain.

John Carr: I meant that, in relation to advertising, for example, of different types of products, below the age of 18, in theory and in principle, on Facebook, Google and all these other major social networking platforms, certain types of advertisements will never be presented to you. If you assume you have truthfully declared your age and it is below 18, certain classes of adverts will not be there. You will be able to disclose your physical location. A lot of these apps and these websites collect physical location data. If you are 18 or above, I think I am right that, by default, it is turned off. If you are below the age of 18, it is turned on. There are a number of things that do apply between the ages of 14 and 18.

My real point is this, though. We only have one rule. It is binary: 13 to 18 is too broad a spread. I remember that when I was 16 certain things were happening in my life that were not happening when I was 13 or 14. I think there is a case for saying that 13 to 18 is too broad a spread and it should be more closely examined and defined. I do not know what the answer is. It is very complicated and technically challenging, but that does not mean it should not be done.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: Will might have wanted to answer.

Will Gardner: I was thinking when you were talking about policy more in relation to schools. There has been a lot of policy support in place for schools in relation to this particular area about developing acceptable use policies, training, education and awareness, and suchlike. There is a self-review tool available for schools called 360 Degree Safe, which is free; 10,000 schools are now using it and they are self-assessing what they are doing in relation to internet safety. It has given us an incredible picture, because that data is channelled back and we can see what is happening across the country in relation to e-safety, what are the areas of strength in schools and what are the areas of weakness. On the policy side and the filtering and connectivity angle, that is where the strengths are in schools. More in relation to staff and governance training is where the weaknesses currently are. That is what we know.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: You think that is a good way forward.

Will Gardner: It is really important that we are looking to develop better training for school governors. The UK Council for Child Internet Safety is developing something for governors right now to try to support that level of knowledge. Staff training is an ongoing thing. There is work going on in this space, but it is a big challenge. As we know, children are as likely to come and talk to anybody in a school in relation to an incident of bullying, whether that be a teacher or a school staff member, and it is important that we make sure that there is that level of understanding and knowledge of what to do in order to respond to these issues.

Earl of Caithness: I just want to press you, Mr Carr, a little more because you ducked it right at the end when you said you did not like 13 to 18 as a group but you did not have an alternative. Come on—you have got to have an alternative.

John Carr: I can tell you what my gut feeling is, but this issue came up rather acutely when we were still full members of the European Union, because, there, they were considering a whole new set of data protection and privacy rules. The point of view that I expressed in my evidence to the European Union was that there ought to be proper, academic, independent research done into the different ages at which different types of capacity develop within children. There has been some done in relation to advertising and things of that kind, but it is rather old now. It was not specifically oriented towards the internet. So the view I expressed was, “Let us look again at the way children and young people are working in and around this new digital environment and see if there is a more nuanced view that we ought to be taking”. Maybe 13 is the right age; maybe 17 is. All I am saying is that there is no evidence to support it.

Earl of Caithness: As a quick follow-up to that, even if we did that and decided it was right, would we have any influence if everything is being governed by America, who will not change their 13 year-old rule?

John Carr: Spain, specifically, said no to the American law, and they passed a law saying that they thought 14 was the right age. They did that about eight or nine years ago. The companies in Spain do honour that. By the way, they only honour it to the same extent that they honour it here—that is to say, they still do not check what your actual age is but you declare 14. In Holland, they have adopted 16, and, again, as far as I am aware, most of the internet companies at least nominally honour that age limit. We should be able to do better; we should be able to produce good research to show it, and, yes, I think within our own jurisdiction the companies would honour it.

Q6 Baroness Benjamin: I would like to declare my interests. I am the vice-president of Barnardo's. I often speak on behalf of the NSPCC and I am the vice-chair of the All-Party

Parliamentary Group for Children's Media and the Arts. We have reported on children's online behaviour.

I have just come up with an idea. Instead of the blanket term of pornography, how about sexually abusive behaviour in imagery? It makes it quite different, because a lot of people enjoy watching it.

John Carr: That is certainly more accurate.

Baroness Benjamin: At least you know what you are dealing with. It is on the tin: you know what you are dealing with. In 2015, the NSPCC carried out a project in conjunction with Mumsnet to ask parents to view and rate the 60 most popular social media, games and apps that children use. They found that parents saw sexual content in 72% of the sites; bullying in 52% of the sites; and violence/hatred content in 52% of sites. Do you think there is enough guidance and advice available to parents, who often declare that they are ignorant about the internet, to enable them to educate and inform their children, or to protect their children from inappropriate content?

John Carr: There is no shortage of advice. I do not know how well it gets through to the intended audience. Will, you do more work in that space than me.

Will Gardner: There is a lot of information and advice. There is a challenge, absolutely, in keeping that up to date, and there is the work that you are talking about, which is the Net Aware work from the NSPCC, which is a really important piece of work. Ofcom found that 76% of parents of 5 to 15s said they know enough to help their children manage online risk. It is quite a big level of awareness, but that is still 24% who felt that they did not, and there is absolutely a need to do more there. We have learned over the years that we need to be working in this space. Schools are a really important avenue in this space. We know that parents' preferred source of information on this topic is schools, which is really important. We feel that being positive in relation to technology and not too scary, which can be quite disempowering for parents and can lead to an outcome that nobody is looking for, is another lesson that we have learned over the years. But we know this is going to be a continual thing that we need to focus on. Also, in the Ofcom study, 9% of parents of 3 and 4 year-olds said they felt their child knows more about technology and the internet than they do. There is going to be continual work to reassure and equip parents to take that parenting online as well as offline.

Baroness Benjamin: Do you think there should be some sort of public service broadcast that gives parents a message on this? There was the Green Cross Code advising them how to help

their children cross the road. Do you think there should be some sort of pornography or sexually abusive behaviour imagery code to alert parents about the dangers?

Will Gardner: If you take it topic by topic, there is scope for doing that. If you want to focus on pornography or cyberbullying and address parents on that subject, there is scope, but online safety as a whole is too big to boil it down. We have had these conversations. We have wanted to try to develop these simple three things that you need to do, but it is more than three things. It will depend on the age of the child you are looking after as to what those things are. There is a real need for very simple messages. We do have big activities and campaigns that are current. We organise Safer Internet Day, which is in February every year, and we reach 20% of parents on the day, which we think is a good achievement for a one-day campaign. We also need to support schools to work in that space. There have been big public awareness campaigns before, and the UK Council for Child Internet Safety has those. “Zip it, Block it, Flag it” was the message that was put out on bus stops, and there have been other attempts to do that. My sense is that it has to be more sustained than that, and the budget is not there to provide that in a sustainable way. That is more likely to come through institutions that parents are continually relating to and interacting with.

Baroness Benjamin: Some parents put a block on certain computers at home, but I had a case where one parent did not do it on her work laptop and the child found it. There is that kind of ignorance with parents not realising the implications of doing it as broadly as possible. For children who do not have parents who care, that is the other problem we are dealing with.

John Carr: I remember “Clunk Click Every Trip”. I will not mention the man who spearheaded it, now that I have brought that to mind, but never mind. I think a sustained public campaign, public health-type of approach, would benefit us greatly. The problem up to now is that the Government have not been willing to spend any money on this type of public education work. They have relied entirely on the industry to do it. The industry has stepped up to a degree; there is no question about that. They have done very well; they have got something called Internet Matters, and Will and I are both on its board. But in relation to the total size of the problem and the challenge, it is nowhere near being enough, and it certainly does not match anything like you get in the public health field. So I would certainly welcome a shift in emphasis in that sort of way.

In respect of pornography, however, I think the answer is very simple. There should not be any in places where children go. We have never argued that pornography should not exist on the internet. That would be a stupid and illiberal thing to say, but we have said that pornography should not be accessible unless and until somebody has been able to prove that

they are an adult—that is to say 18 or more. We have succeeded extremely well in doing that in the field of online gambling. We should and can do it in respect of pornography, and there is a Government Bill that will shortly be before your Lordships' House that will help in that regard, although it does have a fatal weakness, which perhaps we will come on to later.

Q7 Bishop of Chelmsford: It would be very good to hear more about that, but I want to take us on to something that has come up several times, which is the role of education and schools in all this. As you will be well aware, PSHE—personal, social, health and economic—education is a non-statutory subject on the school curriculum. What part do you think that could play in safeguarding children primarily in the digital environment and in teaching them and helping them to get the benefits from it, and should it be compulsory?

Will Gardner: We are part of the group that supported the move for PSHE to become statutory. We think that is a really important element. Sex and relationship education guidance has not been updated since the year 2000 formally, so there is a real need to do more in this area. The NSPCC study that just came out looking at the issue of pornography, where too many young people responded that they wanted to emulate some of the things they had seen in the online pornography they had come across, is a case in point. Young people need help to understand. If we are not able to protect them from seeing these messages, they need help in trying to interpret and understand what this actually is. I think that is a very compelling reason, but it is broader than issues around pornography and sex education. It is around peer pressure, body image and social media. Sexting and cyberbullying is all wrapped up in PSHE. At the moment we have the computing curriculum, which has e-safety education for key stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 that was introduced in September 2014. We would like to see statutory PSHE picking up on the behavioural elements of how we need to equip and support young people. PSHE is a brilliant way to do it, because, often, there is not a black and white answer or a right and wrong answer in relation to some of these discussions. There are shades within it. We need to try to help young people discuss and develop the correct norms of behaviour. I think the PSHE environment is a really good way of doing that.

Baroness Quin: I would like to follow up something you said before about some kind of public information or awareness push—some kind of campaign. In your view, who would lead this? There seem to be several government departments that have an interest, whether it is Education, Home Office, Culture, Media and Sport, or Health even. Has any thought been given to a government initiative that matches the UK Council of Internet Safety that you were talking about before?

John Carr: If you speak to the police, which presumably you will be doing at some point, their view is that we have to start thinking about this whole area as we do public health-type issues. From the point of view of the police—obviously they will speak for themselves—they see this challenge as being on the same scale as and similar to other types of health-related issues that have occurred in the past. Was “Clunk Click” a public health issue or was it not? I guess it was and it was not. You said earlier that there is lots and lots of advice around for parents. It is reaching them that is the issue.

If we rely only on schools, we will fail. Why? Because for a great many parents, schools are not welcoming places that they feel comfortable going to or being part of. I did it for my own children at their school. I went and gave talks at parents’ evenings and so on and so forth. In the room, there were lots of parents just like me. Lots of parents were not in the room, and it was probably their children who needed the help the most. Relying only on schools is doomed. That is why, again, I get back to the point about public health. Where do people go? They go to doctors’ surgeries, supermarkets and hospitals; they go to a whole heap of places in which schools do not figure. Again, that is why I think a public health-type approach—a much bigger, broader-based thing—is required. It is beyond the resources of the industry to finance it. Industry, by the way, is too diffuse a term in any event. There are so many different individual players now in this space, which is why the obvious place would be for government to lead it, and health would be my first choice.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: While absolutely taking the point that you cannot put all this onus on schools, and what we mean by schools is teachers, could I none the less ask this in relation to the possibilities that PSHE represents? First, what is your observation about the ability and the willingness of teachers to take on the responsibility for delivering an effective programme, and what is there out there to help them to get properly equipped? If we had PSHE as a standard part of the curriculum, they would be trained in it along with all the other millions of things they have to do, but they would be trained in it. For those who do not have that training, what is there to help them and encourage them to deliver that work effectively?

Will Gardner: The approach that we have taken from our organisation’s perspective is to provide resources and to make them as easy as possible to use for teachers. Some of the topics that they would need to talk about in this context are very difficult things to talk about, such as sexting, involving sex and technology, which can be a daunting subject to bring up with a group of young people. We have to provide teachers with materials with which they feel confident and comfortable and hold their hands, if you like, to the point at which they can see exactly what they need to do. There has been a lot of work developing such material for

teachers, which has been tested and is there. We have just developed a PSHE toolkit covering a number of these different issues and which we are waiting to launch and promote. There is a PSHE association that provides some accreditation for these resources, which can help them to do almost a quality control of some of the resources that are out there and to disseminate it to the teachers who need to have it. They have a great network of PSHE educators across the country.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Presumably, the take-up of that is effectively voluntary. The schools that do not choose to take it up do not have to. Is that the case?

Will Gardner: That is the case. By and large, if schools have a problem, our experience is that they will want to talk about it. If it is a sexting or cyberbullying issue, that has often been the driver for schools to want to talk about these things. The other big driver in the education system at the moment is Ofsted, which provides great leverage on school leadership to address e-safety from a policy and education perspective.

Q8 Baroness Kidron: It always seems that we go very quickly to parents and schools, looking for them to deal with the result of this rather than the cause. I want to go back to the technology itself. There is one part of this that is filtering and blocking. I have a very baseline question about how effective you think it is, but, perhaps more interestingly, what are your views on where industry is failing, where industry could flip the switch a bit and provide services? John, you have already mentioned that we could have age verification around sexually violent images. I would like you to talk a little about that.

John Carr: Facebook's pioneering slogan—the idea on which the company was founded—was “Move Fast and Break Things”. It ties in with another idea, which is central to the whole idea of how the internet industry operates, which is permissionless innovation. The whole thing is about having a great idea, getting it out there and seeing how it goes. If we find out there is something wrong with it later, it is based on this idea that it is better to apologise than to ask permission in the first place. You get the product out there, see how it goes, and, if something goes wrong with it, you tweak it and change it if and when you have to.

I think that is wrong. I think we should try to establish, either through law or culturally, that any and every company has a duty of care to children if it brings out a new product or a new service, just as it does in the physical world. If you bring out a new iron, a new toaster, a new motor car or a new anything, there is a whole set of hoops that you have to go through to prove that it is fit and proper to be put in the marketplace in which you are about to put it. That does not apply in internet space. It should; there is no reason why it could not. By the way, Facebook has now abandoned, officially at any rate, that slogan of “Move Fast and

Break Things”, but the philosophy is still deeply embedded in the way internet businesses think. That idea of establishing a duty of care would be a very big step.

On filtering and blocking, the first key point to make about that is that within the United Kingdom, while it is true that all our big internet service providers provide free filtering tools on a voluntary basis, these only reach 90% of households; 10% of households are not covered by the big ISPs. What about the children in those households? There is a gap. Lady Howe has been bringing a Bill to your Lordships’ House persistently for the last five or six years, which, had it been passed, would have closed that loop. It is a shame that it was not passed because it should be; 10% of the children of this country is too big a percentage to ignore. Filtering has a very important and valuable role to play. It is not sufficient, but it is certainly a very good start.

Will Gardner: I agree with John. We do not want to overpromise on what filtering can do. If we see it as a useful tool, probably its main benefits are in relation to accidental exposure and for protecting younger children. You can see very clearly that that is something you would think parents would want to engage with and use. So it is a useful tool, but we must not overpromise and give people the idea that that is what they need to do.

We have the ISPs, and John spoke about the 90%. But there are the mobiles, which are all covered, and then there is the public wi-fi scheme, which was recently set up. From a UK perspective, we are leading in that area.

Over the years there has been an established good practice of what industry should be doing, covering a wide range of different industry providers. They cover some really very basic elements; for example, there must be clear safety information and advice on the service that people are using, and there must be clear, prominent and accessible safety tools that people know they can use to block and report and so on. This has been encapsulated originally in Home Office good practice guidance and now in UKCCIS good practice guidance. The challenge for is to try to make sure that that is spread out there right across industry. The bigger players are more engaged in this process, but often it is the smaller ones that are not. The process of technological development seems to be very rapid and very sudden. The people who seem most surprised by the success of the service seem to be the people developing it sometimes, and safety seems to be catching up in relation to the popularity of many services.

Baroness Kidron: Can I press you on this point? A great deal of what gets blocked is around the issue of content, and that is a large part of the concern. But you have expressed that what concerns kids is things such as bullying and so on, and some of the things that would make

them safer are cultural things, such as not being on all the time, having time-outs or things not spreading along keywords that might be in the algorithm. I am pressing you again and asking you whether you think, in this fit and proper test, industry should have a little more pressure put on them about the cultural aspects. As they move fast and break things, they are breaking kids; it is not just things.

John Carr: Would I want Facebook to teach my children how to behave? I am not sure about that. Of course, to the extent that they can influence the way children behave, they should do it to the maximum degree, but I would not look to the industry for advice and guidance on a lot of these sorts of things. Many of them, particularly the smaller developers to which Will refers, will only act under pressure anyway.

The Chairman: Baroness Benjamin, I have a little queue here of people wanting to speak. Lord Sheikh wants to come in next and then Baroness Bonham-Carter, and then we will come to you.

Lord Sheikh: There is one issue that we have not talked about, which is racism. We have talked about bullying, grooming and sexual exploitation. Racism worries me. To what extent is racism a problem and, if so, how can we deal with this? The second point is regarding what happens at school. We have talked about cyberbullying. Could the child also be subject to verbal and physical bullying at school? Do they happen simultaneously? Does it occur like that?

John Carr: I am looking at Will's research on the very point, Lord Sheikh. I will defer to Will on that.

Will Gardner: We did a study on online hate and we found that young people's exposure to online hate included racist hate online. There is a significant percentage—24%—of young people who said that they had seen that.

Lord Sheikh: As high as that.

Will Gardner: They had seen that online. I am not saying it was directed at them, but they had seen it online. When we talk about cyberbullying, we are talking about a whole range of different bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying. That is all encompassed within that term. That has come to great prominence in our discussions among the UKCCIS community about the political discourse that we have just been through, the referendum result and the rise of racist and hateful incidents, and what we can do to support schools in relation to that, because there will be an online component to that.

Lord Sheikh: Do you think that has increased post-Brexit?

Will Gardner: For online I do not know; I do not know if there is data on that. I think the police are reporting a rise in reported incidents, and I think it is only natural to assume that that will take an online form as well.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: We may possibly have moved on, but I was interested in what you said, John, about how the gambling industry had managed to hedge their world. I do not quite understand why that cannot be translated into—

John Carr: Well, there you are. The 2005 Gambling Act, as it became, went through with all-party support. It imposed an obligation on every online gambling website to institute an age-verification mechanism before you could place a bet or receive any winnings, and so on. It had to be compliant within the money laundering rules as well. We have never had the same in relation to pornography or, indeed, other adult content. The Metropolitan Police, for example, did an experiment on the sale of knives. They sent children under police supervision into shops to try to buy knives, and in something like 95% of the cases the child was unable to buy a knife because the shopkeeper saw the child, guessed that they were under 18 and would not sell it to them. Online, children succeeded in about 70% of cases in buying a knife. It is not just pornography where this has been an issue.

In the Digital Economy Bill, which had its First Reading in the other place last week, there are provisions that the Government have brought forward. I was a member of the working group that helped draft them, although they did not listen to every word of my advice, otherwise it would be better than it is. When the Bill reaches you, there is a proposal to introduce age verification specifically in relation to pornography sites, and it is an extremely good measure and very important, but it can be improved and I will happily explain why in a briefing note later.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: What is the fatal flaw?

John Carr: The fatal flaw is that the new regulator will be required to notify banks and credit card companies where the non-compliant pornography sites are—that is to say the sites that are not introducing age verification—but there will be no obligation necessarily to block access to them. The assumption is that the banks and the credit card companies will withdraw their payments facilities, and that will be a great incentive for the porn sites to introduce age verification, but there will be a category of pornography sites that will not do it. We are saying there needs to be a residual power in there to allow the regulator to say, as we do with child pornography and child abuse image websites, that that site must be blocked.

The Chairman: Are you talking only about where there is payment involved in those cases?

John Carr: Yes.

The Chairman: Is there not an awful lot of very unsuitable material that is entirely free that requires no interaction?

John Carr: All this material that we are talking about is free at the first point of access, and that is the point at which the age verification mechanism needs to kick in. But you have hit on a very good point. The Bill is not intended to catch every single publisher of pornography. It is only aimed at commercial pornography websites, but, by the way, they are massively the most important of the two. I know the NSPCC gave evidence to you in which they expressed a slightly different view. It would be wonderful if we could catch every single porn site. Some of them are absolutely tiny, little, insignificant things at one level. If we try to catch every tiddler in the pond, the big fish will swim away. I think we need to be more strategic and tactical. I agree with the Government's approach to that extent. We should go after the big commercial porn sites. If we can make that work, we can come back and revisit it, and find a way to deal with the other non-commercial, smaller ones and user-generated content, but if we try to do it all in one hit I am afraid we will fail.

Baroness Benjamin: I heard that the porn sites are making £2,000 per second. It is a big industry.

John Carr: There is a strong commercial incentive for some to comply, but some of them will not, so we need to have a residual power in the Bill—it is not there at the moment—to allow those sites to be blocked as if they involved child abuse or other forms of illegal content.

Baroness Benjamin: One of the criticisms often raised when you mention blocking, age verification and filtering is that people say that legitimate sites will be blocked, it is not fair and they do not want it for whatever reason. They want to watch porn and why should they not? If they did watch and they had to age-verify themselves or admit that they are watching, their bosses will know they are watching porn, and they do not want anybody to know that. That is one of the arguments. Do you think that filtering has become better developed so that not every single thing is blocked? Do you think it is better that we safeguard children and people switch on rather than having to switch off?

John Carr: The way filtering works at the moment with most of the ISPs—not all, by the way, and that might be something that you could look at, at some point—is that parents always have the option to turn off the filters or the filters might not work. The measure that the Government are bringing forward is nothing to do with how parents use filters in the home. This is about the responsibility of the people making money out of pornography; they have obligations as well. If a kid goes into a bar and asks for a pint of beer, you might regret the fact that the parents were not around to stop them going into the bar in the first place, but

it does not give the barkeeper a right to give the child a pint of beer. So it is with pornography. If parents for whatever reason turn off the filters, it still does not mean that the people making all this money out of pornography have a right to give it to five year-olds. We still need this separate and additional power in addition to the filters. They are not alternatives; they are complementary.

The Chairman: We are coming to the end of our time.

Baroness Benjamin: The point I wanted to make is that there are people who do not believe in filters.

John Carr: I once had to produce my passport not that long ago in a bar in America to prove I was over 21. It was mildly irritating and inconvenient.

The Chairman: You were flattered.

John Carr: Apparently they do it to everybody. It is mildly irritating and inconvenient, but I understand the social benefit and social gain behind it. It is true that some guys who are currently looking at porn without any restraints will probably have to go through a few hoops in future to do so. I am very sorry about that, but the greater benefit—the greater gain—is that we will be able to protect our children more effectively.

The Chairman: I am not going to come to you, Will, because we are running out of time, but you can pick up anything on that, if you would, in writing.

Earl of Caithness: You have answered most of what I was going to ask.

Baroness Benjamin: I asked his question. I am so sorry.

Q9 Earl of Caithness: Parliament produces legislation and regulation. Is the current regulation properly enforced, because there is no point in having it if it is not? Given the Digital Economy Bill, which is focused primarily on schools and age verification, have you any confidence that that will be enforced and make a difference? I have a third question, but I will wait to ask that so that you can answer those two first.

John Carr: As the Bill is currently drafted, no, I do not have confidence in it because, without a residual power to enforce the decisions of the regulator, I am afraid there will be sites that are able to get around it. If they are not subject to the jurisdiction of UK courts—and, overwhelmingly, these guys are in California, by the way, Uzbekistan and various places, and certainly not here—they can ignore a decision of the regulator because they cannot be brought to a British court. It is not an extraditable offence. We have to have a residual power to say, “Block access to the site”. That is one thing. More generally, there is relatively little regulation in this space, as a matter of fact. Baroness Benjamin asked earlier about the filters. The fact is that we only know about the efficacy of the filtering regime that we have in this

country because of voluntary declarations that the ISPs made to Ofcom. Ofcom simply asked them, “Are your filters working and how many of your customers are using them?” I am sure that each of the ISPs answered those questions truthfully, but Ofcom did not check; Ofcom did not verify the answers that it received because the Government did not ask it to. The Government simply said, “Will you write and ask them what the current state of play is?” I think it would be much more in the public interest, and it would give lots more people confidence in that data, if there was some regulation or power to compel truthful answers, or for Ofcom to be able to inspect in some way what they were doing.

Will Gardner: Very briefly on a different note, it is over a year since we introduced revenge pornography legislation, which was intended for use in relation to adults, but one year on we have found that the legislation has been used in incidents in relation to children, and that is significant to find out because, from our understanding, that was not the intention of the legislation. When there are indecent images of children, there is a different piece of legislation—the Protection of Children Act—that should be used in relation to that. The first Act does not have the intent that is carried in the revenge pornography legislation. If this second revenge pornography legislation is being used in relation to cases with children, I would want to ensure that the subsequent other things that come along with sex offences, such as the sex offenders register and all that type of thing, are also included and are not seen as different things. I want to make sure that that is tied up. It was a surprise for us to see that cases involving children had used revenge pornography legislation.

On a different point around enforcement, on the issue of sexting, this is what we are discussing very much at a UKCCIS education group around the response of law enforcement to sexting incidents. What is the responsibility of schools to escalate to law enforcement, trying to make sure that that is done in a way that protects children? There is the development of a new code for law enforcement called Outcome 21. In order to prevent a case in which children had been sharing images with each other being passed on to law enforcement, it does not necessarily get tagged and recorded in a way that will reflect on DBS checks in the child’s future life. Outcome 21 would help to protect children from that in the future.

Earl of Caithness: My follow-up question is: can a country act totally unilaterally in this area effectively? Given that these platforms are in America, Uzbekistan or wherever they have come from, can we as a country act effectively against those sites that you want stopped? Does it make any difference whether Britain is in or out of the EU as far as this whole subject is concerned?

John Carr: Before the European Union became energetically involved in this online child safety space, Britain was pretty much the only country within the European Union at the time that was doing anything at all. I used to meet with American companies and I would say, “This is what is happening to British children”, and more or less routinely they would say things like, “How interesting. We are not hearing that from anywhere else. You cannot possibly expect us to change our policies or change our behaviour just because in one country—yours—you say things like this are happening”. Of course, when the EU began to engage, we started meeting children’s organisations and regulators from all over Europe, and found out that pretty much in every country the same sorts of things were happening to children. The American companies could not ignore the European Union because it has a gigantic amount of clout in the way that one single country simply does not. I voted to remain and it is very sad from a number of points of view that we are not going to be there. That does not mean, though, that there is nothing that we will be able to do in future. That would be a counsel of despair. We are still a significant market; we are still a significant player. By the way, we are probably going to have to copy all the rules that the EU develops anyway. That is going to be true in many areas, not just this one.

The Chairman: We are wildly out of time. We will have to skip our final question, but would you like to wind up, Baroness Kidron?

Q10 Baroness Kidron: You both started saying that the biggest issue is bullying, but by the time we get to governance we always talk about sexting, pornography and so on. Do you not think that there is some space for regulation or legislation around reporting and response times, and upping the game for kids around the bullying piece, which is the bit that they are worried about?

John Carr: My short answer to that is that we should start thinking about the big online platforms in the same way as we think about public utilities. We should not simply take the word of Facebook or Google for it that they are behaving in exactly the right way in all circumstances at all times. There should be Ofnet or something that has some inspection powers and some ability to require them to open up their books. We have asked them time and time again, “How long does it take for you to deal with this type of complaint from a child?” “Oh, trust us. We are doing it”, blah-blah-blah. It is not good enough and I think eventually we will get public accountability. Ofcom would be the obvious place otherwise, but maybe it needs a more specialised agency focusing solely on online space.

The Chairman: A final word, Will.

Will Gardner: It is a very important point, because with the social media environment we rely on users to make reports to remove content. That is currently the police in this environment, and we need to make sure we maintain users' trust in that system. We have argued for speedy response times. Tying people down to a response time is very tricky. The best we have obtained is some services saying, "We will do our best to respond in 48 or 24 hours". That is a big jump forward, because there have been instances in the past where people one month later say, "I am still waiting to hear", not knowing that their report has been reviewed and rejected, and they should be taking another course of action. It is much more empowering and we need to keep user confidence. Some of the issues of reporting are very different. If it is about IP, for example, legal teams will need to be involved and it is not really responsible to say, "We will get back to you within 48 hours", because that will not be the case. But there is a way of framing users' expectations that is a useful compromise with which industry can work. We have seen some do that. Also, I can single out Facebook because they have a dashboard for users making reports, where you can track your report and see what happens to it. Developing transparency around that reporting process is enormously empowering for young people to maintain confidence in that system. There is more we can do in that space, but I do not want to get so seduced by that as being the solution to the issue in its entirety, obviously. If we are relying on industry to solve cyberbullying, they have an important role to play, but clearly there is an offline element with which we need to be fully engaging.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. If there is anything else that you feel the Committee ought to know about, perhaps you would drop us an email later.

John Carr: I definitely will.

The Chairman: The fact that we have run way over time indicates, I think, our interest in what you had to say to us. Thank you both very much indeed. It was really helpful.

Examination of Witnesses

Dr Dickon Bevington, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, **Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones**, Consultant Psychiatrist in Addictions, and **Dr Angharad Rudkin**, Child Clinical Psychologist

Q11 The Chairman: Thank you for joining us. We move to part two and welcome to each of you. Before we get into our questions, would you say a few introductory words about yourselves so that we have it on the record. Dr Bowden-Jones, would you go first?

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: I am a consultant psychiatrist. I am the founder and director of the National Problem Gambling Clinic, the only NHS service for pathological gamblers in this country, and I am the spokesperson on behavioural addictions for the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. Dr Bevington?

Dr Dickon Bevington: I am Dr Dickon Bevington. I am a consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist. I work in the NHS in a substance use service for adolescents and I am medical director of the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, which is a charity developing the next generation of psychosocial treatments and running a lot of training, mainly for statutory services around the country.

The Chairman: Thank you. Dr Rudkin?

Dr Angharad Rudkin: My name is Dr Angharad Rudkin. I am a clinical psychologist and I work with children and families who experience mental health issues, behavioural difficulties and emotional difficulties, and I teach clinical psychology at the University of Southampton.

The Chairman: I thank all three of you for joining us. We will not be requiring my colleagues to declare their interests. You may have heard them already because we have done that in our first session. Lord Sheikh is going to start us off.

Lord Sheikh: All three of you have backgrounds in psychiatry and psychology. I want to ask about mental health issues relating to children. When they look at violent video games and the sharing of information, there are many instances where there has been self-harm. Are there any particular elements of children's online access that you have seen that are having a detrimental impact on their mental health and well-being? Do they differ according to the age group? Perhaps, Dr Bevington, you would start.

Dr Dickon Bevington: The simple answer is yes, there is evidence of harm. This is a very broad field. One of the main findings that is worth bearing in mind is that, although there is evidence of harm from pornographic sites, bullying and some of the other social media interactions, many children are exposed to material that they describe as upsetting and distressing at the time but are not harmed. One of the features of exposure to extreme internet-mediated experience is that it is a particularly good filter for children with pre-existing vulnerabilities. Those may be pre-existing genetic vulnerabilities—children with neurodevelopmental disorders, who are rather impulsive, who rush into things, who may already have a history of vulnerability and bullying, and be traumatised through their upbringing. They certainly may be children with a vulnerability in relation to low parental responsibility for knowing where they are and what they are doing. In one sense, the internet

is extremely different in the threats that it offers, but, in another sense, it is extremely similar. It simply filters children who have high levels of vulnerability for genetic or environmental and upbringing reasons.

Lord Sheikh: Does it differ according to the age group?

Dr Dickon Bevington: Yes. There is growing evidence that those children who develop significant problems with internet-related behaviours are classically engaging in the internet in unhelpful or harmful ways at younger ages, which is incredibly similar to the history of young people who develop, say, substance use problems. The earlier you start your use of substances, the more the risk of you developing lifetime, chronic and severe problems. It is very similar to exposure to extreme content on the internet or exposure to bullying influences, which I agree from the previous evidence is often the highest preoccupation of young people. It may be that that is what they bring to people like myself rather than the pornography.

Lord Sheikh: Could it have a long-term effect where the child would be affected for a longer period or would it go away with counselling?

Dr Dickon Bevington: It is difficult to answer that in very general terms. A single traumatic incident could be very successfully treated if the child has good parental support, is able to access help and has parents who can bring them to treatment, and a pre-existing psychology that they have some trust in their helpers. For most of the children who get into real problems around the internet, going back to my previous point, you have already filtered the ones who have low levels of family support or psychological attunement to help. They tend to be children who are less able to make use of help, certainly in ways that it is offered conventionally as a treatment. There was a recent study in 2014 in one area looking at compulsive sexual behaviour. There were very clear connections looking at young adults. It was quite a small sample of about 20 non-problematic young adults and 20 with compulsive sexual behaviour and a quite significant misuse or harmful use of the internet. Those very much fulfilled the criteria that I was talking about, and that, potentially, is quite a long-term problem, not just for them with a great deal of suffering but for the people they interactive with through life, and can be very difficult to treat.

The Chairman: I am not going to ask all of you to answer all the questions because we will run out of time, but do please come in whenever you feel like it.

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: That is a very good explanation, and I share a lot of those thoughts. Going back to this suicide risk, it is important to focus on the idea of the internet as a place that may exacerbate pre-existing thoughts that were present, potentially, in a subclinical way. As Dickon has mentioned, you may have a child who is socially withdrawn

because of environmental circumstances or, indeed, potentially psychiatric ones, but let us think about someone who is in a situation in which they cannot access help immediately. We know that children with low mood are more susceptible to becoming vulnerable to internet addiction, for example, and those children can distance themselves from their support networks and enter into another reality, because they are nowadays able to choose specific chat groups that may be particularly focused on low-mood depression, self-harm or, potentially, suicide. I have had patients in my clinic who have learned about suicide and self-harm from peers on the internet. These are people who, in the past, might have instead shared their troubles with schoolfriends and might have been pulled out of it. Instead, you see a real fragmentation of the tapestry that held them afloat, and you see them sinking at a time when people around them are less aware of what they are thinking because they are withdrawing. Actually, the withdrawal and the turning to the internet to lift one's mood at a time when things are very difficult are part of the criteria we look at through the diagnostic questions we ask.

Dr Angharad Rudkin: I agree very much with what has been said, but, thinking about the developmental trajectories during childhood and adolescence being a particularly tricky time, as we all know, and that need to explore, that curiosity and that increase in risk-taking, when that is happening on the internet, this is part of the issue that we have to deal with. The very normal developmental trajectory is taking place in a different arena.

I work with young people. I have four distinct categories of the internet with which or around which I work. The first is social media, the second is gambling and gaming, the third is pornography and the fourth is the internet as being an incredibly rich resource and incredibly wonderful database for young people to access, be creative with and explore. When I am working with young people, certainly of a younger age, part of those four would be more important than when I am working with adolescents.

Bishop of Chelmsford: I wanted to come in at a slightly different angle, which I am not sure we are covering in any of our questions elsewhere. We are inevitably focusing on some of the damaging effects from particular issues and people, but I am wondering about the very fact, for instance, of a very small child, under two, having a tablet and interacting with that with completely appropriate or age-appropriate material, not damaging material as such, but perhaps spending excessive amounts of time on it. What are the issues for child development in those very early, critical years? I gather some research has been done into these areas. I do not know much about it. I wonder whether you do.

Dr Angharad Rudkin: Yes, there is emerging research on it, and the use of devices with toddlers upwards is certainly increasing. Some research has shown that it increased by about 15% even between 2014 and 2015. It is becoming very much the norm for toddlers to spend time on their mother's or father's iPhones or tablets. Parents do this in an educational role. They believe that somehow these apps, games or videos are enhancing the child's educational capabilities, but I guess we cannot ignore the fact that there is a babysitting aspect to the internet and these devices with young children as well. We need to very much build on the information and advice there for parents on how much and what should happen. Certainly, in America, for example, there is advice that they should have absolutely no access up to the age of two, and thereafter two hours a day, but it is not based on any evidence. It is very much based on opinion. It is very much based on fear of change for all of us. This is not anything that we had to deal with when we were younger. We need to help build up a very good, robust evidence base, which helps us—professionals and parents—to make some informed decisions about whether if my two year-old watches a video for 15 minutes it is going to cause harm or is going to help them. What is it going to do? Certain research has shown video deficit theory, for example, where young people do not learn from videos in the same way that they do when they are interacting face-to-face with people. The concern is that these are not interactional activities. The young person—the child—will not be chatting; they will not be communicating or interacting. They are purely passively watching. It has been found that there is a slightly different effect in terms of learning from that as opposed to watching and chatting to your mum, your sister or a nursery worker.

Q12 Baroness Benjamin: Moving on from that, we all know that you can become addicted to certain behaviour patterns, such as smoking, drinking and shopping. There has been some research done that found that four out of 10 children are becoming addicted to the internet. Some children like taking their tablets to bed with them, and they would rather speak to their friends online or view sites online, and are not engaging with human beings. Is this an exaggeration or should we be worried about the issue of children being addicted to the internet? Have you seen an increase in the cases reported to you recently about this behaviour pattern?

Dr Angharad Rudkin: Before handing over, all I would say is that, for children, the immediate gratification is how they live, basically. Their sense of being able to delay gratification for a longer-term benefit is not quite within their cognitive capacities when they are young. So, for children having an immediate thrill from eating sweets and cakes, and similarly from consuming videos, games and TV programmes, it is very hard for them to

understand that that is causing or may cause some long-term issues. Parents have to deal with young people who love the immediate gratification that they get from getting through a different level on a game or from watching a “Peppa Pig” film or whatever, and being able to realise that, if you do this all day long, this may impair your development. We are not quite sure yet, but it may have an impact on it. It is very hard for young people to appreciate that. When I am working with young people, they say, “I just cannot turn my phone off. I just cannot stop playing these games”. It is because they do not yet have the capacity to think, “If I do this now, then in five years’ time I am not going to be very pleased that I did it”. That is where parents as police, mediators and regulators all come in, and that is what causes a lot of family issues.

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: Again, I would like to emphasise everything that you say. Taking it a step further, there is very good work from a Professor Jeff Derevensky at McGill University, who has looked at the potential priming of children’s brains in relation to the games they are playing online now from an early age and how that might feed into the impulsivity that they already experience because of the late maturation of the frontal lobes, but it might also make them into human beings who are much more sensitive to a dysregulation of the reward pathways and more vulnerable to things such as pathological gambling, for example. Although no money is exchanged, there are continuous dopaminergic rushes in the brain as these children are constantly moved from one activity to the other with small rewards that are not monetary but are still relevant within the game. I just wanted to add that, because that is a body of work that is extremely well-respected around the world.

Going back to the addiction, we need to be a bit careful when we read about relatively small studies talking about an epidemic of internet addiction. I pick up on the European conversation we had. We need to measure excessive internet use, which is necessary but not available as yet, and I would like to stay away from addiction, because with children it is far more complex. They may be focusing on one of the criteria but to such an extent that they are suffering academically, et cetera. We need to identify the best possible screening tool and try to collaborate with our fellow European colleagues to find out exactly what the prevalence is at the moment. There are studies showing anything from 1.5% in Holland to 8% in Asia. I leave out the Asian countries, because I think they genuinely have higher prevalences. I have travelled and have spoken at various meetings there. They do see a higher prevalence, and there are clinics set up by the Government in various places to treat these issues. Again, they are issues that arise because of several other things, potentially, that are not quite right in these children’s lives, but it is a fact that they are scoring highly when they are screened.

In England and in Europe, for example, with gambling, there is four times the prevalence in children as in adults because of the higher levels of impulsivity, as we talked earlier, and then there is a spontaneous remission for three-quarters of them, and you end up with a very vulnerable lot who continue to be pathological in adulthood, or you might end up with different adults who were not pathological as children. This gaming and this internet addiction as a whole is an issue that we not know enough about. We are not investing enough focus in terms of research and we are certainly not treating them in an evidence-based way, which therefore does not give us the understanding that we could have.

If I think of the National Problem Gambling Clinic, now that we are publishing data on 1,000 to 1,500 people, we know—we understand—the illness in England as it is now in our patients. We cannot do that with this particular presentation because we do not have the evidence base.

Dr Dickon Bevington: The only thing I would add would be to underscore this idea that it is a little premature for us to draw conclusions about the harm of spending time on the internet. However, we are absolutely clear, and have been for a long time, that it is what you are missing out by spending time on the internet that might be the more important bit. In particular, in the very early years, how do we develop a sense of ourselves? How do we develop these communicative capacities? All the evidence is absolutely robust that it is about what we call the intersubjectivity. It is me making a gesture of distress to my mother, my father or a carer, and seeing my mother or father imitate that distress back to show me that they have understood my state of mind, and then come up with something that might address that state of mind. That teaches me a couple of things. No. 1, it starts bit by bit every five minutes, every 10 minutes, every hour, and gives me a sense that I have a mind, which can be a happy mind, an excited mind, a frightened mind or an angry mind, and my parents are showing me this through this reciprocity. I show them something; they show it back to me in a slightly modified way that I can see, “You have understood me”, and I begin to get this sense that I am an agent in the world and I have a mind that has different states. That is what you do not get if you are on a screen all the time.

Baroness Benjamin: One of the problems a lot of children have is that they count how many friends they have following them on Facebook as important and they go crazy if their phone or tablet dies on them. That is something that I feel, in a way, is almost becoming an addictive-type behaviour or fear of not being liked or wanted or feeling important.

Dr Dickon Bevington: I do agree with Henrietta. We have to be very careful with words like “addiction”.

Baroness Benjamin: What would you call it then if it is not addiction?

Dr Dickon Bevington: I just think we have to be careful before we collapse it all into something that may or may not be exactly the same. The qualities of an addiction are: do you need more of the same to get the same effect? In other words, do you become tolerant to that thing? Do you have withdrawal effects? There are whole categories of things that we would use to judge addiction, which generally have not been used in the age groups of two, three, four and five years old. I treat children with substance use addictions, and, with regard to some of the ways in which those play out, my threshold for concern may be rather low compared with an adult treater, because, clearly, the young person is having their addiction in the middle of a developmental trajectory that is like an aeroplane taking off at the end of the runway. At the end of the runway there are things such as getting GCSEs, being able to fall in and out of love with a bit of grace, and having the social competence to go and do a job interview. If those years when you are trying to get that flightpath right are interrupted by formal addiction or excessive use of the internet without all the other things that you need to get those skills in place, then you are in trouble.

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: It is a continuum, and harmful use is a very helpful term. It is harming the individual. They have lost their friendships; they have fallen behind at school; sometimes I see people who have opted out of school altogether because of sitting in their room playing video games. They may be extremely distressed and depressed, and now on anti-depressants because, as you say, they are overly concerned with people's opinions about them on social media. All these things are very real and can absolutely destroy an individual, a child, in their attempts to be who they want to be during a particular school year or within a family. But, when we look at addiction itself, there are a certain number of criteria according to diagnostic guidelines that need to be reached in order for the addiction itself. If you look at it as a continuum, by the time things are very severe, the children I have seen are in their room day and night; they are having their meals at home in their bedroom, not with the family any longer. They have now fragmented away from the nuclear family. They have lost weight. They are not exercising. Their mood is very low. They spend time being excited online and often then jump from gaming to porn to other types of sites that are very dark, and they have lost sight of who they are. They have no resilience, essentially. By that point, I would agree with you that addiction is there.

Interestingly, even with these young people, often dealing with the environmental issues gets them better much faster than just focusing in a cognitive behavioural way on the activity of being online. When they have enough trust in you, they themselves will say, "I am so unhappy with everything. I would not be gaming if my life was better" or "if my parents

treated me in a different way”—often, bullying comes into this—or “if I was not bullied”. Bullying is the worst thing for this, because people literally hide away physically from any companionship, any schoolground, whatever, and they have gaming as an excuse.

The Chairman: We are on question 2.

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: We are passionate about what we do.

The Chairman: My colleagues are passionate about asking you questions. We do not want to draw to a close at the end of question 3. I say to my colleagues that we will not do supplementary questions to you, and I say to the three of you please be as precise as you can, if you would. Let us go to question 3.

Q13 Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: To change the subject a little, Dr Rudkin, you talked about the great advantages of the internet being the access to a database and information in a way that, before, the internet was not available to us. It is a fantastic benefit. My question is this. I know that there has been some research done by Ofcom, but in your experience—I am not sure which of you to address this too—is there anxiety about what trust is placed in the sites that they visit, and what implications does that have for their future development, their critical thinking and critical faculties?

Dr Angharad Rudkin: Yes, and I think it is trust that the young people put into the sites as well as the trust that the parents put into the sites. For example, when you think about WhatsApp, a vast majority of parents do not know that there is an age limit on it. They were not aware that you had to be 13 to be on WhatsApp. There is that sense that we are trusting as parents and young people. Because it is there, it must be good. There is an awful lot of work to be done around regulation and education there. When we think of children as consumers, they are naive. Adults can be incredibly naive around consumerism as well. But there is something about having to give them the information and for them to be clever consumers around different sites.

When it comes to a media character, for example, that young people really enjoy and trust, suddenly they do not have any critical faculties when they are consuming something to do with that character.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: Can I make my question a little more pointed, perhaps, so that I am clear? A lot of people in this country read one tabloid newspaper, which they trust hugely. They think it is accurate; they think its opinions are objective. A lot of us perhaps do not have that view of that particular tabloid. Their critical faculties, because they have trust in that particular tabloid, are not very great. Is there a difference between young people accessing the internet and sites and the example I have just given about a tabloid newspaper?

Dr Dickon Bevington: There are some similarities. There is some very elegant, rather new research that is looking at this idea about how we develop trust in another person or, rather, trust in the value of the social knowledge that they might have in their head that we might try out with other people in our life. How do I learn from you and apply things next door? Going back to what I was talking about, about this intersubjective experience, it is the extent to which when I look at you I have an experience that you have got me; you have understood my predicament here, now. The extent to which I get that experience from you opens probably an evolved mechanism that is quite unique to humans that says, “If you are that good at doing that and understanding me, then the other knowledge that is in your head is worth me trying out in the rest of my life”. Why is this significant? As the children that we are talking about move on in life and might start to look for some site that recognises their dilemma, that is what biologists would call assortative mating. You tend to connect with people who are similar, more like-minded with you. The young people who have very significant drug and alcohol problems, when I ask them, “How serious do you think your problems are?”, often say, “Kind of in the middle”. You think, “Really”. Of course, they are in the middle because they are doing it more socially, but their whole social world revolves around drugs and alcohol.

If you go on to one of the pro-anorexia sites, people share their desire for thinness and promote thinness as a way of life. Self-injury sites robustly argue that it is their form of self-expression and robustly resist people’s attempts to say that this is a bad way of doing it. They will speak of their distress and their suffering in such a way that another young person who may be slightly earlier in the journey will think, “You are the first people I have met who actually get me”, and they will trust them.

It is a technique not unknown to politicians, but tabloid newspapers use it very well too. You tell people what they are really distressed about, and then the message that you need them to take away and deliver elsewhere follows soon after. I do not think the people in these sites are necessarily doing this with such malicious intent, but it has this pernicious effect of collapsing people’s worlds in the way that Henrietta has been talking about earlier. It is very seductive.

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: Maybe you pointed to something that is a positive of the internet. There are plenty of teenagers nowadays who shop around and who are able to give you a much more balanced view than some people of our generation, and I think we need to accept that it is not all bad in any way.

Q14 Baroness Kidron: I would like to move the conversation on a little and talk about the design of the internet itself. Obviously, none of you is designing apps and websites—or

maybe you are. But you talk very eloquently about opportunity costs, what you are not doing while you are on, or excessive use, which I would like to suggest is a norm for us all now. It is not very excessive and extreme use but a culture in which general use is excessive, possibly. In that regard, what would you like to see designed in? Even if you cannot do it yourselves, what are the elements? You have talked about reward loops, but what are the other elements? What would you like to see?

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: Can I reply to that because I feel very strongly about this? Having spent the last seven years on the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board looking at prevention, looking at things that can help the vulnerable populations, there are things we can learn. Timeout is essential. I think timeout allows people a moment to get out of that tunnel and say, “Hang on a minute. I have just spent all my birthday money on eBay. Was that a good thing? Do I want to carry on?”

Particularly if the sphere of the internet is porn, when I see patients who turn up in terrible shame and guilt about the endless hours they spend—14 or 15 hours at a go; I am not talking about an hour or two—timeout would have absolutely helped them. I do not do the technical side, so I cannot say exactly how this can be done other than by forcing the provider of the material to offer timeout. “If you have been on this site for over two hours or an hour, please opt in to take 10-minute breaks, and opt in when you are not hot from the activity but cold before you start”. It is the same in gambling. When your mind is so completely wrapped up with winning or losing and you are chasing losses, you have lost your critical faculties to decide how much money you have apportioned towards gambling as a recreational activity and you are way down into taking money from the mortgage to repay your debts. I do believe that is important.

There is a problem with this, particularly with more unregulated spheres, because people jump from site to site. They sometimes have various tabs open at the same time so that they look at different types of porn within the same hour or two. It becomes very hard to get timeout on everything.

If you establish it on your own device, then in the heat of the moment you are only going to move to a different tablet or a different mobile phone. I do not have the answer, but, neurobiologically, I know that we could save a lot of people a lot of problems if we asked them to take a moment of rest before they question whether they really do want to continue with an activity.

Dr Dickon Bevington: I know there has been an enormous amount of talk about this over the years and it has proved impossible, but it still strikes me as sad. This is the idea of a universal

button—a sort of, “I am in too deep”, or, “I am uncomfortable with this” button. CEOP has talked about it. I know various other organisations have. I think it has proved incredibly difficult. That would be at the level of the browser, and browser developers do not like other people telling them where they should put their buttons. But a button that was universally recognisable would be a massive help that connected you to a fairly simple algorithm for finding the right kind of help. It is not beyond the wit of these organisations, I think, to go back to that and have another bit of a think about it. I know it has been talked about for years and has not happened.

Baroness Kidron: Did you have a quick wish?

Dr Angharad Rudkin: I suppose, thinking about subclinical populations where it is not particularly problematic, that people who are creating these apps, websites and forums should be aware of child development informational research so that they know exactly what kinds of things are going on for kids who are going to be accessing this information, whether they are adolescents, three year-olds or seven year-olds, and to have some very clear classification for parents who are introducing their children to these different sites.

Baroness Kidron: Do you mean age appropriateness? Do you mean age rating?

Dr Angharad Rudkin: Absolutely; information for parents.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: I think you have answered one part of what I want to ask you already, but, listening to you, I am hearing that you are describing the internet and its many manifestations as an extremely effective tool for amplifying or exacerbating—which was the word you used earlier—vulnerability. Out of that, there is the question of what is cause and what is effect. The question of what should be done about it is quite problematic if we are not entirely sure what is cause and what is effect. However, that said, there is a general sense that something must be done, which affects all of us around these issues. Do you have a sense beyond what you have already said about who is or should be responsible for tackling—let us not call it addiction, because we are not sure whether that is what we mean—the harmful overuse of the internet? Whose responsibility is it or should it be to try to put some controls in place of the sort that you are describing that would begin to tackle some of the effects on mental health and well-being that you have described?

Dr Dickon Bevington: Everyone’s. The internet is clearly a somewhat larger invasion of newness into the world than the invention of literacy. Socrates was dead against literacy. He thought it was a really bad idea; he thought it would rot people’s memories. Humans have a long history of inventing stuff that they do not know what to do with and then taking a century or two to work out how to do it. We can accelerate our learning, but we do have to

have a view to the fact that this is a massive change in the way that we are thinking and communicating. There are parental responsibilities, absolutely clearly. There is education. In terms of health, we definitely need some very robust research—really well-conducted research. There is somebody in the room who is doing quite a lot of it sitting over there, and that is Professor Livingstone, who has led the way with the EU Kids Online research.

We have moved the goalposts with our alcohol limits and how many units are safe, but, broadly speaking, they have helped to work people's minds around the fact that a little might be fine but a lot is probably a bad idea. So, if I had one idea about how we go forward, there may be differences for different age groups and different kinds of quality of activity, but some kind of alcohol units-type parallel would be a helpful way forward.

The Chairman: What about time online?

Dr Dickon Bevington: Time online and the nature and the activity.

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: I have a suggestion on a rather large scale but I imagine that several people in the room might find this a good idea. It would be to bring together people who may have experienced problems, people who have treated problems, people from the government side and, indeed, from the industry side, to do a much longer piece of work. In a way, what you are doing here is so fantastic. You have opened this big can of worms, and we have identified several issues that need to be addressed in depth. Why not have a conversation with a trusted body of people who have shown that they are completers and achievers, and they can give results for the well-being and protection of the vulnerable in a specific area, and bring them together to carry on the work that you have started today?

Dr Angharad Rudkin: Could I add to that and agree that it is everyone's responsibility, but it is getting the information to parents right from the very start? We should get midwives involved. When a parent first becomes a parent, they should start thinking that their child is being born into the internet area. What are you going to be doing with this? What kind of information is there out there? What kind of research evidence is there that will help you as parents to understand the internet and any impact it has on child development, and what are appropriate sites and what is appropriate information? We need a multi-sectoral, single place to which parents, professionals and anyone working with young people can go, and the information is there as it grows through these conversations from different sectors.

Bishop of Chelmsford: It is my question next, which anticipates that.

The Chairman: Lord Caithness, do you want to come in very quickly with a supplementary?

Earl of Caithness: It relates to both the Bishop's and Baroness McIntosh's question. Do you have an agreed guideline of what is addictive, what is excessive, and what is little? You have used these terms, but what does that mean in real life?

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: It is slightly different with children than with adults. With adults, you can say, "If you have compulsive online gaming and you are doing it for more than 30 hours a week, we can define you as a person who has an addiction to gaming". As I mentioned earlier, any one of the nine criteria one could use in assessing the negative impact of gaming on an individual, and in a child that one particular criterion could devastate their life and their ability to progress. Therefore, I would say no, not really; it is much harder to be systematic about that in that way. However, it is all about tolerance in a way. How much are you increasing the activity to a level that is unbearable to others around you, to you and to your sense of direction in life?

Dr Dickon Bevington: I suppose, "What does healthy internet use look like?" would be an equally important question to ask, because the counter to all this sense that it is a disaster is to say, "Let us just not show our children the internet at all". That would be massively disadvantaging them these days, so somewhere there is an idea—it is a bit fluffy—of what is healthy internet use. This idea of building a sustained conversation with young people, parents, mental health professionals, legislators and industry, getting into the meat of what healthy or harmful internet use looks like at different ages or developmental stages, seems critical.

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: Which games are the most addictive, for example? Get the feedback from the population and then tackle the industry. "Why are you creating games that are so harmful? These are the criteria. Please stop".

Q15 Bishop of Chelmsford: We have gone on to this subject a little, but you have spoken a lot about the need for there to be research, good advice and guidance for parents. Does that mean there is not any at the moment? What help is available for parents in terms of mental health issues with the internet and—we must not call it addictive—harmful use? Also, does the NHS have any resource or expertise to deal with these things? Does it get talked about in a doctor's surgery?

Dr Dickon Bevington: Children's mental health services are in a major funding crisis at the moment. Everyone says that all the time, but come and look at child and adolescent mental health services. Is there a bespoke specialist network of practitioners who have the training and experience? Answer: no. Are there a lot of mental health professionals who do this sort of work or work with young people where part of their problems either have come to light

through the internet or are manifested through their harmful use of it? Yes; lots of people are doing that work, but the kind of specialist treatment that Henrietta's service has is unique. I work in an addiction service—a substance use service—but we are commissioned to work with substances and not with the internet. I happen to think that, if you do not ask a young person about their online life, you are not taking a proper mental state history, and it would be one of my shouts for the psychiatric and mental health profession that we should be asking about this.

The Chairman: Angharad, do you have anything to add?

Dr Angharad Rudkin: Yes. It is so much easier to intervene early before things get difficult, and we need to help parents, teachers and everyone else working with young people to realise what is a healthy norm. We need to establish that ourselves as adults. I know you talked about PSHE earlier on and that kind of sense of helping young people critically to be aware of their internet use and what the risks and benefits are. Risks do not equal harm, but what are the potential harms?

Bishop of Chelmsford: I am sorry to interrupt you, but is that information available but we are just not communicating it?

Dr Angharad Rudkin: Yes. There are loads of people doing amazing things. There is MindEd, for example; there are various websites that have loads of information on this. There is Baroness Kidron's information on 5Rights. Until people think it is a problem, I do not think they are going to access the information. What is happening is that parents of our generation just do not know when it is a problem or not until something really bad goes wrong or the child gets very impaired. It will be interesting to see in 10 or 20 years' time, when people are becoming parents themselves who have grown up with the internet, what kinds of issues they will be dealing with when they are thinking about their families.

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: One of the things that is very hard to deal with at the clinic is the number of phone calls from parents of children who have internet issues. Because they are not gambling, we have to turn them away. We are not commissioned to treat this disease. When they ask us where they can go, if they can go to a centre that is designated for internet problems, we do not know where to send them. We have done a lot of research to try to find a national centre or something similar to what we do in gambling. This led us to do a pilot to see whether we could start treating the illness, and we had about 100 people coming through. Some of them were young, but none of them were children. There is an 85% success rate, so it is a treatable disorder. It is just understanding the illness and using the right treatment. My big wish would be to see a replica of what we have for gambling but for gaming and the internet

in general, because in a specialist centre you can then embark on all the background research that you need to do with a newly discovered or newly understood illness. You can provide the back-up in order for legislation and policy changes to take place if needed when products are deemed to be unhealthy or certain people are deemed to be very vulnerable. Things can happen at a countrywide level if the illness is understood.

The Chairman: Baroness Quin, you have a very big question. Please ask it.

Q16 Baroness Quin: Given what has just been said, I would love to pursue that, but I know we do not have much time. As if current challenges were not bad enough, we are looking ahead also to future technologies such as artificial intelligence and the internet of things. I am sure it is quite difficult to assess risks related to these things at this stage, but is thought being given to risks in these kinds of new developments?

The Chairman: I have a feeling this one might be a big, new departure for all of you. Possibly it is one from which we would do well to get some written evidence from you, unless anybody feels there is a one-minute answer.

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: Thirty seconds: virtual reality and post-traumatic stress disorder. That is one of the big things that people are talking about.

Baroness Benjamin: Could you elaborate on that? I find that really interesting. I would love to hear more.

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: I am going to get told off.

Baroness Benjamin: We might start suffering.

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: I would be very happy at any time to talk to any of you in a different setting and not take up too much time today, but I would be very happy to do that.

Baroness Benjamin: No; I would really like to hear about that. Even for people listening, this is something that I had not thought about that needs to be said rather than having it written down.

The Chairman: Try to be brief.

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: I will be extremely brief, partly because I do not know very much about it myself. I hear from talking to industry that people are developing games, using virtual reality, that are putting human beings in situations that are causing them to experience fear, and then to experience positions of being unable to escape the setting they are in, still in VR. It is being noticed that there is a residual psychological state when the game ends that is similar to post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, with hypervigilance, nightmares and whatever it may be. There will be plenty of online information about this. It all started with a

conversation about a game and people shared the fact that even people in the industry are experiencing symptoms, even though they are used to these games.

Dr Dickon Bevington: Just to throw you one other googly, there is artificial intelligence and adolescent development in the sense of self. If your sense of self is reciprocity, we will be involving worlds where people are defining themselves as not just uncomfortable about being one or other gender but uncomfortable to the extent to which they are or are not part AI. People are going to fall in love with AI.

Q17 Lord Sheikh: I found your presentation here most informative. We have covered a number of issues, including mental health issues, the well-being of children, this question of addiction, trust, design of website controls, help for parents and artificial intelligence. Now, we are parliamentarians. What role should Parliament have? I have enumerated the issues that you would like us to pursue. What more would you like us to do?

The Chairman: Each of you in turn, please.

Dr Dickon Bevington: In one sense, we have talked about the specificity of the challenges that the internet brings up, and I would not want to lose that or diminish the importance to develop the research. Some of the research that is going on is great but I think it needs more funding. In one sense, there are also generalities. We were talking about the fact that the internet is just a new environment that filters or amplifies or exacerbates children and young people who already have major vulnerabilities. In reality, the overwhelming stress on mental health services, in general, for me is a greater threat than the lack of very specific internet-based services, which is not to discount their value. It is just that on the larger thing children's mental health is crumbling at the moment. I train teams around the country, so I am not just talking about specific areas. There is a massive stress. If we are to mount some kind of concerted effort, I am afraid it comes down to money.

Dr Angharad Rudkin: I would say very much so and add that regulation, information and research should start early, getting information to parents, and making sure that our discourse is based on evidence and not opinion and fear, and harnessing all the great work that is being done all round the country and all round the world, being able to bring it together so that we can make the most of it.

Dr Henrietta Bowden-Jones: For me, it goes back to what I mentioned earlier. I think you, in this room, have the power to make something big happen in relation to future generations and the internet, and I think a group with all the responsible stakeholders would start changing the way we experience internet at the moment.

The Chairman: Well done; you did that one tremendously well. Although we are way over time, we are not so badly behind. If you would, we would welcome more from you, particularly on the question we could not get into too deeply, which was artificial intelligence and the internet of things. If there is anything you can offer us on that, that would be enormously helpful, but if there is anything else that you can bring before us we would be extremely grateful, and we are extremely grateful for all that you have said and done this afternoon, although I have had to restrain you and restrain my colleagues. It has been extremely worth while; thank you all very much indeed.