

Select Committee on Communications

Corrected oral evidence: Children and the internet

Tuesday 29 November 2016

3.35 pm

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Members present: Lord Best (Chairman); Baroness Benjamin; Earl of Caithness; Lord Gilbert of Panteg; Baroness Kidron; Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall; Baroness Quin; Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury.

Evidence Session No. 9

Heard in Public

Questions 129 – 137

Witnesses

I: Baroness Shields OBE, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Internet Safety and Security, Department for Culture, Media and Sport; Edward Timpson MP, Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families, Department for Education; and Nicola Blackwood MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Innovation, Department of Health.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Baroness Shields OBE, Edward Timpson MP and Nicola Blackwood MP.

Q129 The Chairman: I welcome the Ministers. We are very privileged to have three of them. We have decided that the collective noun for Ministers is an abundance. It is great that you have all been able to come.

As you have gathered, our Committee is looking at children and the internet and all the issues with that. At lunchtime today, we met 30 children, who came to talk to us and told us about the issues as they saw them. That was fascinating for us. Baroness Shields, may we refer to you as Joanna, along with Nicola and Edward, to make life easier for all of us in these otherwise very formal proceedings? Thank you, Ministers, one and all for joining us.

We are trying to get through an awful lot of questions in a very short time, so we are going to target you. Questions are not necessarily to be answered by all three of you. Some will be for just one of you. Those asking the questions will make clear to whom they are directed in the first place. I assure you that we will get through a lot in the one and a quarter hours that we have allocated to this, with much gratitude to you for joining us. Away we go. Baroness McIntosh has the first question.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: This one is for you, Lady Shields. It is fairly general. With all your experience of looking at this issue, do you think that we currently have suitable and effective systems that are already in place and have been put there by the social media platforms to deal with the problematic content lots of people are very concerned about? Even if there are already protections, could more be done? Can you see what more could be done and how that could be achieved? In particular, should online platform providers be required to prioritise and to point up trusted sources of information in response to searches? We are increasingly aware that there is an issue about how young people, in particular, discriminate between one source of information and another. Would you like to give us your views on some of that?

Baroness Shields: Certainly. I will answer the question by saying that there are caveats, based on what type of internet harm or crime we are dealing with. We have a very good working relationship with the industry around the identification and removal of child sexual abuse imagery. That one is a lot easier, because it is illegal in every jurisdiction that they operate in. We have that very strong co-operation. They are very responsive to our requests.

In other areas, it is not quite as good. For example, content that is extremist or violence provoking—it may have been uploaded by a proscribed terror organisation or a far-right organisation—sometimes falls into a grey area with regard to the countries in which they are operating. We have a very clear idea of what should come down. In general, we are successful in that work, as well. The Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit does a very good job of identifying content that contravenes our legislation. We get a percentage rate in the high 90s in getting that

content removed. On other content—violent and abusive content—there is a spotty track record. I would say that it varies, based on the internet harm or crime concerned.

The thing that is most challenging in this area, as we become a more and more digital society and more and more connected, is that children have a phone with them. I heard this morning that 80% of kids today have access to their own digital device. They are connecting almost 24/7, often unsupervised.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Can I interrupt you for a moment? When you say “children”—you referred to those statistics, for example—what do you mean? Do you mean people between the ages of 13 and 18, or do you mean children from as young as eight? What does that stat cover?

Baroness Shields: I believe that the figure that I heard this morning from Ofcom was for children from 12 to 18, but 80% is a high number. What is happening is that it is accelerating in complexity. My conversations with the industry are often around saying, “Okay, you have been very co-operative when we raise these issues with you, but it does not scale for government or users to be the primary contact to identify this material and to ask for it to be removed. It just does not scale”. A lot of our conversations are therefore around developing technology that will automate that process. For example, how do we use artificial intelligence, machine learning and natural language processing to identify content so that they can flag that up proactively and remove it themselves, before we have to ask them to do it? That is the only way in which it can scale.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Can I ask you to talk for a moment about content that is not illegal but may not be appropriate? How can you better put in safeguards against the wrong people accessing that?

Baroness Shields: The major platforms have terms and conditions that generally prohibit this type of content—at least in an organised way, by organised content providers. User-generated content is really the challenging aspect. A young person may upload an explicit photo of themselves. That photo becomes part of the internet, and there is no way to recall it. It is much easier to take down a piece of content that is developed by a publishing company or an organisation than to take down something that is user generated. The best way in which to deal with the second scenario is to develop digital resilience. I am sure that my honourable friend Edward will talk more about the process of building digital resilience into the curriculum and helping young people to become digitally independent and confident in their choices, so that they do not make that mistake in the first place.

The Chairman: It has been pointed out to us that in other countries—mostly, I must say, totalitarian regimes—government simply takes down those sites that are undesirable and unhealthy for the recipients. We do not.

Baroness Shields: No.

The Chairman: Does that tell us that the technology enables that to happen relatively easily?

Baroness Shields: The products that we use most are not normally available in the countries you refer to. Most of the products—the social networks, for instance—will not be available in those countries. If you look at Russia or China, many of the products that you use every day will not be available. People who operate in those jurisdictions operate under the terms and conditions of government—whatever is placed upon them. Whatever those regulations are, they operate in that way in order to function in that environment. To answer your question, there are indeed technical ways of identifying this type of material, but generally it has to be done by the platform itself or by opening up a channel to a third party—in this case, a Government—that could do that.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Could I ask you either now or later—it may come up again—not to lose sight of the point about trusted sources?

Baroness Shields: I am sorry for not coming back to that; my apologies. It is a difficult question. It is part of the zeitgeist of the moment and had very real implications recently, in the election. We are still trying to decipher what happened. The reality is that this is not necessarily a requirement on a commercial company. However, it would be in its interest to look at the issue and to understand how its algorithms amplify content that ignites passion in people and how what works very well for advertisers can become problematic, in the sense that the algorithmic bias then moves that content to the top of the news feed. I have not deciphered it in depth, but it looks like that is what happened. I know that you have asked the companies about that. They are much better placed to answer the question, but it is an issue. It is a challenging issue for their brands and an issue of trust with their users. If I were there, I would recommend that they be very keen to address it.

Baroness Kidron: Do you welcome the statement that the EU has just made that it is looking for more transparency around algorithms and is interrogating this for the first time?

Baroness Shields: When did that come up?

Baroness Kidron: Very recently. It announced that it is going to look at the issue specifically.

Baroness Shields: We have been looking at all the university research around algorithmic bias and how it manifests on the various social media platforms. It is a very real issue, because that very algorithmic bias is what enables products to communicate their value proposition. It makes us like great brands that we love and share them with our friends. It is part of the business model, so it is really important to make sure that that business model is not favouring nefarious interests.

Q130 **Earl of Caithness:** This is also for you, Lady Shields. Do you think that

there is enough understanding between parents and children about how their online data can be collected and used? At what age can a child understand what agreement that child has signed up to? Do you think that 13 is the right age for that? If so, what is the evidence for that? Besides the age limit for consent, what other protections should children be entitled to regarding their personal data?

Baroness Shields: Your first question is about whether I believe that parents and children understand the data that is collected about them, their rights and what is available to them as regards removal. I do not think that people understand very effectively what their rights are in those scenarios and what is dictated by the terms and conditions of the companies that operate those platforms. It is interesting, because the information about that is available in the terms and conditions, but it is buried inside the legalese and is very complicated and difficult for a parent to teach or for a child to understand. You often give consent without care, just by accepting the terms and conditions. The companies have reacted very well, by creating safety centres where they detail exactly what types of data they are collecting. They are very good about privacy notices and various other things, but you have to know that you are looking for that and where to find it. There is an argument that it would be good if that information were more transparent.

With respect to your question about age, it has always been age 13, since the internet began. Most of the companies sprang out of Silicon Valley and were in the United States, where 13 was the age of consent for accessing internet services. I do not know whether that is the right age or not. In the general data protection regulation, which has been passed and will come into effect in May next year, the age of consent was agreed to be 16, but we and other countries wanted to have the opportunity to explore in more detail—through consultations and in other ways, working with experts—whether 13 was the desirable age. The UK therefore secured an agreement with Europe to look at that. We have the discretion to legislate to 13.

Earl of Caithness: The third question was: should there be any other conditions, besides age, to protect children and their data?

Edward Timpson MP: Shall we move the spotlight to a different part of the stage? To re-emphasise the point that has already been made, if we are truthful about it, adults are not very good at managing their personal data. We have a lot to learn ourselves before we espouse that in relation to children. That makes it all the more important when we look at the generation coming through, who are living their lives online, that we build in as early as possible their understanding that they have at their fingertips the ability to control their personal data and to protect themselves to a greater extent than we probably do ourselves. We will probably come on to the computer curriculum. Trying to build in the digital resilience of young people—from a much earlier age than we ever imagined—is one of the best defence mechanisms that we have available to us to ensure that, as we become more savvy as adults, we also have a

generation of children coming through who are even better prepared for many of the risks, as well as the benefits, that the internet has to offer.

The Chairman: This leads on to you, Baroness Quin.

Q131 **Baroness Quin:** In the course of the inquiry, we have focused quite a bit on the role of schools and what they can and, perhaps, should do. It is fair to say that I, at least, have got the impression that there is quite a variety of practice in schools on this. I am therefore interested in asking you about the balance of responsibility among parents, schools, government and industry. What is the role of government, in particular, given that you are a Minister in the Department for Education? How much do you think schools should be doing? How much should government be aiming not just to spread best practice but to ensure that all schools follow certain practices?

Edward Timpson MP: The starting point is that sense of collective responsibility. We try to practise what we preach on that in relation to the cross-government work that we do with the UKCCIS board. I see that Professor Livingstone is one of your advisers. I know her very well from the work that the board has done, which is bringing together government, industry, charities and now, much more, the education world, to try to get them to work together for a common solution to many of the different issues that arise.

There is always a tension about where the greatest level of responsibility should be. There are those who, understandably, see it as the role of the parent to make sure that the child whom they bring into the world is equipped with the life skills that they need to cope with whatever modern life throws at them, but there is undoubtedly an important role for schools in enabling children to acquire the resilience that they need. Because this is a new and emerging area, not just for government or industry but for individual teachers, there will be a disparate level of response to what is required.

Our job as the Government is to try to set out a very clear approach that every school should follow. If you look at digital resilience, since September 2014 we have had the new computer curriculum, which sets out all four key stages, right the way through primary and secondary school. Children will acquire an escalating level of knowledge at those four key stages. Those are exactly the tools that they will need to cope with what the demands of e-safety will be for them. There is also a need to provide teachers, as well as parents, not just with the information but with the confidence that what they are doing actually works. We must back that up by having any inspection of a school look at whether, under its behavioural policy and under the computer curriculum, it is fulfilling that and whether the outcomes of children are being improved as a consequence.

We have worked with a number of organisations in relation to keeping children safe in education guidance, for instance. That looks at the whole of safeguarding. We have worked with the NSPCC, Childnet and others to

make sure that we are developing both that and the computer curriculum in a way that will be impactful for every school. Of course, there is always frustration that we cannot have that level of consistency across every single school on an ongoing basis, but we have to keep working towards having as much of it as we possibly can. There is more that we can do through the new filtering and monitoring—which we may come on to—that schools now have to provide to make sure that we have that wholesome response, but ultimately it has to be a whole-school approach. We cannot see this as the domain of just one or two people in a school. Where it works exceptionally well, that is because everybody buys into it and they all make it their business, rather than seeing it as something for which the maths teacher, the PE teacher or whoever it is has to take responsibility.

Schools have a central role to play, but at the same time we need to improve the level of understanding and engagement of parents when children leave the school gate. We know that the rise of cyberbullying and other online threats does not stop at school—it can follow children into their bedrooms. That is where working closely with parents pays off in trying to provide a better response.

Baroness Quin: Some of our witnesses have argued for PSHE to be made a statutory subject on the curriculum. Is that something that the Government are considering or favouring?

Edward Timpson MP: We are actively considering where we go next in relation to PSHE and SRE, principally around quality and access. You will appreciate that we have a still reasonably new Secretary of State who has come into the role. It is her prerogative to look at this afresh, from her own point of view. However, we are keen to make sure that we make progress. When I have given evidence to other Select Committees in Parliament, that has been very much the message.

I do not want anyone to get the impression that somehow there is a closed view about what the right approach is. There has certainly been no decision by the Government about whether to make PSHE or SRE statutory. We want to continue to look closely at what the advantages of doing that would be, as well as at how we can improve the quality of the teaching. There is no point in having a wholesale change to either the curriculum or the duties on schools if that is not backed up with a high level of quality of teaching and learning from which children will benefit.

Baroness Quin: Presumably, resources for training in schools will also be important in this.

Edward Timpson MP: That is right. We work very closely with the PSHE Association, which provided guidance on SRE for the 21st century, for example, in 2014 and a programme of study for schools to use in this area. We want to build on that, to learn from where we know that it works well and to give a greater prospect of other schools following suit.

Baroness Kidron: What proportion of schoolchildren follow all the key

stages of the computing curriculum?

Edward Timpson MP: Every maintained school has to follow the national curriculum. If it is an academy, it has to have a broad and balanced curriculum. That should form part of the work that it does. What we are seeing is an increased use of that, either as part of the computer curriculum or more widely, around PSHE or life skills—whatever you want to call it.

Baroness Kidron: That is what I was getting at. A few young people have mentioned that some of the information that they require is indeed in the computer curriculum but that, if they do not take the subject at GCSE level, they do not have access to it. Is it all enshrined in the computer curriculum? Is it not in PSHE and so on at the moment?

Edward Timpson MP: If you look at all four key stages, there is an escalation of the type of skills that children will learn as they develop their understanding of e-safety and digital resilience. That is reflected in the national curriculum. The computer element is relatively new—from September 2014—so it is still bedding in. The important thing for me is that it starts from key stage 1. Speaking from personal experience, I know that children are going to spend more and more time living their lives through a tablet. More of their homework is done online. There are some fantastic programmes and tools available. I spend more of my life than I care to mention on Maths-Whizz and Abacus with my children. It is the direction that we know will be taking hold for the foreseeable future, so we have to respond to that—hence the change to the curriculum, to make sure that it is embedded at every key stage.

Lord Gilbert of Panteg: I have a follow-up question for Edward Timpson on monitoring and filtering, which he referred to. The department is going to strengthen the duty on schools to have effective monitoring and filtering in place. We heard evidence from a provider of a monitoring and filtering service, which was quite extensive. We were surprised at the extent to which the work done by children on school networks is monitored. He said that he felt that the department did not fully understand the potential of monitoring, yet you have raised it with us. Could you address that? Secondly, could you address the balance generally between society's duty to protect children and individual children's right to have some privacy? How can that be safeguarded, particularly in relation to monitoring but also more generally?

Edward Timpson MP: First, the reason why we recently changed the statutory guidance on monitoring and filtering was not that schools were not predominantly making the sensible choice of putting in those systems in the school environment, but that there was not any consistency that we could demonstrate that meant that every child in every school would be able to benefit from having those restrictions put in place. At the same time, we accept that we do not want to restrict children's opportunity to use the power of the internet, whether it be at school or at home. It is about proportionality and having an appropriate level of filtering and monitoring. That is why we have worked with the UK Safer Internet

Centre to put out some guidance to schools about where that level should be. Ultimately, each school will come up with a different solution that works for it and its cohort of pupils.

I do not profess to have the technical qualifications to understand the complexities of how this works in practice, but I know that more and more sophisticated solutions are coming on to the market. As a department, we probably need to understand more about what those options are, so that when we provide schools with either signposting or additional information about some of the routes that they can take we have a full understanding of the implications. I have seen the monitoring and filtering systems that the schools in my constituency have in place, which are pretty impressive and far reaching. There is still a bit of an information gap between that and what parents know about how they can supplement or complement it at home, so that a child is getting a consistent message. That does not prevent them from having the privacy you spoke about in their own engagement at school.

A problem in a number of schools that we have sought to address is the iPhone or the tablet coming into school, forming far too much of children's activities during the school day and being used inappropriately for some of the bullying and harassment that we know goes on, sadly, on the back of it. That is why we have strengthened the powers of teachers and head teachers to confiscate, to remove material and so on. We need to get the technology balance, but it is also about how teachers still interact with pupils, so that the internet does not become a battleground between them and becomes a place where they can do business together and enhance their opportunities to learn.

Lord Gilbert of Panteg: So your guidance covers all of that. It gives advice to schools on that balance.

Edward Timpson MP: It does. We have worked with the UK Safer Internet Centre on that guidance. Of course, technology is moving so fast that we need to make sure that it remains relevant and ensures that schools are making good decisions about what is appropriate for them and their cohort of children.

Q132 **Baroness Benjamin:** This question is aimed at both Nicola and Edward. We have said already that it is widely accepted by all that increasing use of technology in schools can greatly improve academic learning, but we know that it is also a platform that can facilitate harm, including grooming, child abuse, sexualisation, racism, bullying, self-harm, radicalisation, trafficking, gang culture and FGM—the list goes on and on. I am sure that you will agree with me. However, Hilary Cass, president of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, said that failure to tackle emerging problems with young people's mental health meant that the issue was now "a hidden epidemic". Some feel that that is partly due to the impact of the internet on children and young people, especially through social media. How important do you think it is to build up resilience in young people—Ed touched on this earlier—to harm from the internet? How are the Government tackling that important issue?

Nicola Blackwood MP: You have touched on something that is hugely important. However, one of the problems that we face is that the evidence is not as robust as we would like it to be. The last serious prevalence study of mental health and internet use was done in 2004. If we think about what was going on with internet usage and young people back then, Facebook and YouTube had not even started, so that is not a good platform for us to base policies on.

The Chief Medical Officer did an annual report into mental health in which she investigated a lot of these issues. Her findings are that, while there are a lot of positive influences, as you say, bullying and repeated exposure to negative influences are also there. However, she found that prevalence rates do not seem to be increasing, possibly because of greater awareness and safety training. Her recommendation was that, because of the weakness of evidence, we need to do a thorough prevalence study to find out exactly what is going on and what the link is between usage and mental illness. We have commissioned a prevalence study, which will estimate the extent of mental ill health in the two to 19 year-old population. Publication is on track for 2018. It will give us up-to-date and comprehensive information—including on cyberbullying—for the first time. We have never had any proper health information on that, so this will be a step change in how we deal with it.

However, we cannot wait until we have that study to take any action, so there are steps that we have taken in the meantime. We have something called the *Five Year Forward View for Mental Health*, which was published in February. That is the Government's strategy for how we are going to transform mental health services in the UK, because we recognise not only that financial investment needs to go in but there needs to be a lot of restructuring. One of the strategy's recommendations was that we needed to have significant investment in research across mental health. The research document will come out in February, but we are already investing £70 million in mental health research specifically, because we recognise that this is an area where we need to make progress and to do so urgently.

In addition to that, of course, we recognise that we need to change areas like stigma. We have invested £12 million in Time to Change, which is the Government's flagship campaign on ending stigma for mental ill health and making sure that, if people have mental illnesses or challenges with cyberbullying and so on, they come forward for help. There is a specific strand within that for children and young people, which has used social marketing and online mechanisms to make sure that it is more effective. We are waiting for the evaluation of that at the moment.

We are also funding two other programmes I would like to draw the Committee's attention to. One is Rise Above, which is—exactly as you said—a resilience programme that targets young people and addresses different risky behaviours, to try to give them different strategies to manage those behaviours. It is run through Public Health England. We are looking at ways in which we can strengthen that going forward as a

particular strand of work. The second goes back to Baroness Quin's question about resources—not just for teachers, but for health professionals, families and volunteers. It is called MindEd and is an e-learning platform that includes a module about digital risks to mental health, such as the creation of online identities and cyberbullying. It gives an idea of how to build digital resilience, not just by referring to relevant services but by offering direct help. The service was co-designed by young people themselves. That is why we have confidence in it as a useful service to have put in place.

Baroness Benjamin: When will it start?

Nicola Blackwood MP: It has already started. It is operational.

Edward Timpson MP: In fact, I met the MindEd leading group last week or the week before. I recommend that the Committee looks in more detail at the work that it is doing, because it is excellent and has some very impressive findings.

I will add one or two points. You asked what the Government are doing to try to address these issues. Nicola set it out from the Department of Health's perspective. We know that 72% of 12 to 15 year-olds have a social media account. There is a particularly large uplift around the 10, 11 and 12 age bracket, as you would expect, but it is still a significant increase on where we were only a few years ago. We know that that group of children will access all that the internet has to offer, unless there are opportunities for them to learn what they should or should not do. Are they getting the right filtering put on at home, as well as at school, and so on? One consequence of not doing that, of course, is the pressures and new threats that the internet poses for children, which we did not have to cope with: cyberbullying; sexting, which is a big problem; and the sense of isolation that you can feel, without having anyone to turn to, if you are on the receiving end of abuse through the internet.

One area we are working on together as two departments—the Department for Education and the Department of Health—is trying to link schools much more closely to mental health services. We are currently piloting what is called a single point of contact, where a school is linked to a mental health professional. It can refer a child on to them, if there is a clear and acute need for it to do so, but that mental health professional can also help to train and educate staff in the school to spot some of the early signs that things may be going wrong. The early evaluation is very encouraging. We want to look at the potential of trying to spread this more widely, particularly in the context that the interaction of children with the online world is having a deeper effect on their emotional and mental well-being than perhaps we imagined only a few years ago.

In UKCCIS, there is a group called the education group. Through that, we have produced some guidance for governors of schools, who have a more and more influential role, to make sure that they know what they should look out for and what questions they should ask their head teacher and their staff to be satisfied that a good enough response is happening

within the school. There is also some guidance specifically about sexting and how to handle that in the school environment, because that can be extremely difficult. We continue to fund a number of anti-bullying charities, including on online bullying, to work with schools to try to ensure that they have the best possible understanding of what they can do, whether it is peer mentoring or using some of the charities that will come in and work with children.

On supporting teachers, between 2012 and about 2018, we will spend about £7 million as a department to provide online resources to primary school teachers to understand how better to build resilience in young people, through the computer curriculum. We are also creating what we call master teachers; in fact, they already exist. We are training about 300 of those, who can be commissioned by schools to go there to help to train their staff in e-safety and how they teach that. Earlier, I talked about having a whole-school approach. There should not be just one or two people in a school who understand what to do. Everyone needs to be able to spot the signs and to work together to come up with a solution.

There is a whole host of different areas where we are trying to have influence in order to tackle these issues. I hope that I speak for all of us here when I say that we are under no illusions. We are still uncovering the scale and extent of the issue. That is why the prevalence survey is so important. It will really help us to bottom out where we are on this—whether our response is sufficient and whether there is more that we need to do to ensure that we are equipping our children with the skills that they need not just to survive the trials of life but to thrive.

Baroness Benjamin: One thing that we have not covered and talked about so far is the anxiety that children and young people have about using their tablets and phones all the time. They even get up at night-time to look at their phones, to see who is on there. A lot of people feel that that constant contact with the rest of the world has been detrimental to children's health and well-being. Do you advocate the use of time-limitation mechanisms from providers themselves? How serious do you think the risk is that internet use by children and young people may cause compulsive or habit-forming behaviour—even addiction? Do you think that children being on all the time will affect their mental health and behaviour patterns?

Edward Timpson MP: We are starting to see time-limited apps becoming available. That is really encouraging. I have no doubt that there is a correlation—others will tell me whether the evidence exists—between a child's usage of a tablet or other device and their ability to concentrate on a task.

According to Ofcom this month, eight out of 10 parents of five to 15 year-olds who go online feel that they know enough to help that child to manage online risks, but I am not sure whether I am encouraged by or slightly worried about that statistic. As I said earlier to the Earl of Caithness, there are many parents who still have a lot to learn about the effect that their child's use of a tablet or being online for long periods of

time has on their mental or emotional well-being. There may be products that help to time-limit a child's usage. I think that CBeebies goes off at 6 o'clock. You cannot watch it beyond that. Of course, you can record it, but that is a matter for parents. There is a reason and a logic behind that, which is that we need to try to have learned behaviour in children that will be beneficial to them. At the moment, we do not really have any parameters that have been set that are made easily available to those who want to set them.

Of course, it goes back to the question that this is up to parents to sort out within the confines of their own home. Speaking as a parent, I think that we should not let ourselves escape that responsibility. However, there is more that we can do to try to make it easier for parents to find ways to put in those limits, which we know can be effective in ensuring that children do not lose the resilience that we want them to have.

Baroness Benjamin: Are you saying that providers should assist parents?

Edward Timpson MP: There is more that they can do to put products on the market that enable parents, as well as others within the school environment, to have a choice about how they manage time online.

Baroness Benjamin: Have you found that addictive behaviour and addiction are part of the problem that we face?

Nicola Blackwood MP: The findings of the Chief Medical Officer's report in 2013 were that electronic media have "positive influences, such as improved spatial perception, faster information processing and the provision of useful tools to motivate learning", which we have all discussed here. However, she noted that there were also risks of "increased physiological arousal, decreased attention, hyperactivity, aggression, antisocial or fearful behaviour, social isolation and excessive use or 'technological addiction'", as you have mentioned, and that, in association with frequent or persistent bullying, children "have higher rates of psychiatric disorder". She said that exposure to bullying is "associated with elevated rates of anxiety, depression and self-harm in adulthood" and that "More direct harm may arise from websites that normalise unhealthy behaviours as lifestyle choices, such as anorexia and self-harm". However, she was very clear that the evidence in relation to this "is sparse and contradictory". That is why she recommended the prevalence study that we are now undertaking, to make sure that there is a robust evidence base for taking forward policy on this issue.

If it is all right, I would like to draw the Committee's attention to some work that Samaritans undertook in a consultation called Digital Futures, which you may have heard of. It looked at how people used online resources in relation to suicide and self-harm content. As well as the negative experiences that we must all be familiar with, the study highlighted using sites to build peer networking. Three-quarters of the people who took part said that they looked for support online. When we consider the harms and risks associated with this, it is very important

that where people—especially young people—look for help online, they are able to find the help that they need.

A lot of the work that we are undertaking in relation to this at the moment in the Department of Health is to make sure that safe routes for help are available. We have some adult projects such as Big White Wall, which is an anonymous peer support programme for mental health, but it is not available to young people at the moment. This is a very important route to go down, to make sure that there are safe programmes for young people when they seek out help online and that they do not go down the wrong route by accident.

Q133 Baroness Kidron: My question or area of interest builds on what Baroness Benjamin talked about. Joanna, I remember when you came into the House. In your maiden speech, you used a phrase I was taken with: "safe by design". The Committee has been trying to look at childhood by design, recognising that the internet is not very good at recognising that a child is a child. What can we do to do that, to get away from the idea of harm? Perhaps we should talk about what is proactive and what is defensive. A lot of the solutions are necessarily after the event. The things we have been looking at are guidance for designers, programmes for delivering maximum privacy settings and platforms not suddenly turning on your GPS when you update. Those are all things that could, by default, be better for children but not stop adults having free choice. Age verification is another obvious one. Would you like to tell us what you think about that? Do you think that it is an interesting avenue to go down?

Baroness Shields: I have been in the industry for as long as it has existed; I was in digital for 25 years. Safety by design was a concept that started to emerge in services where kids spent a considerable amount of time and there was concern that they would be exposed. Initially, that concern was primarily about grooming for sexual exploitation, but it became about exposure to all kinds of harms and criminals.

We undertook a bit of work in UKCCIS. Last year, the companies came together to deliver a safe by design guide for all developers. It has become a very good best-practice document and has established a conversation and a co-operation between the companies that had not happened before. More and more, multi-stakeholder co-operation is vital to ensuring that we protect young people online. No Government, company or police force can do all of this in isolation, because the boundaries of the internet do not exist by country. We find that the problems that we have here are often the same one that they are trying to address in other countries. Bringing together that global community was the idea behind the formation of WePROTECT, which we created. I am very proud of that. This Government led it. Now it has 73 countries and all the top industry participating, with law enforcement, major NGOs and charities—all bringing together their expertise to try to solve this major challenge, which is evolving and changing every day.

I find that technology offers us these challenges, but it also holds the key to the solutions. Recently, I have been encouraged about the direction of certain companies. For instance, in *Wired* magazine last month, there was an article for the first time about a company wholly owned by Google, called Jigsaw, and the technology applications that it is developing to solve all kinds of problems. One was a redirect method. When someone was looking for extremist content, it delivered a credible news source or an article that was a counternarrative to that. It has developed the intelligence of that and is testing it. It is showing real promise. It has also developed cyberbullying detection and response mechanisms.

Technology is what got us here. I believe that it is also what can help to solve these problems, but it takes co-operation and Governments raising the issue. Reports like this one will bring the issues to the fore and encourage people to co-operate and to develop products that address these challenges. Whenever somebody is depressed and suicidal, they are exhibiting behaviours that are common to all other people who have that affliction. They are suffering. There are clues you can pick up. I was encouraged recently to hear that Facebook had developed a mechanism to identify young people—or any people—who might be at risk of suicide and to try to intervene. You do not need to know who that person is—you just need to understand what is going on. Then you can refer it to the proper authorities and get help for that person. The same applies to self-harm, anorexia and all kinds of things.

When you are connected to a device, it is an uncontested space out there. You can find people who will encourage you to harm yourself and to take the dreadful step of suicide. That is really scary, but the technology exists to recognise those patterns and to connect the dots. We have an enormous opportunity. There is a social responsibility for all the people involved in this, for Governments and for companies to come together. That is the idea behind WePROTECT. That is what is driving the strategy.

Baroness Kidron: Do you think that that idea and that responsibility extend into something slightly broader, which is about wellness and a certain sort of community care for children that means that they are not oversharing, even though it may be in the business interests of a social media site to have them share, by having privacy settings set at high or by not having easy or automatic access to GPS, for example—I am not making specific proposals—so that it is not identified where they are? Do you think that that duty of care, which is now established around very crucial and agreed harms, should go into a broader sense of what we all agree about childhood?

Baroness Shields: That comes from the communities, the schools and the work that we are doing around digital resilience to help people to understand the landscape they are living in. We used to teach kids to avoid strangers and how to cross the road. We still need to do all of that, but now we need to explain to them how to navigate a very complex,

evolving and incredible world out there, which has its risks and harms. We need to give them the information so that they can be confident and develop the independence to make the right choices. It comes from that direction as well.

Everyone has a role to play in this. When it comes to the safety and well-being of children, everyone—government, industry and charities—needs to up their game. We all need to do more, because society is evolving in a way in which it has never evolved before. It is almost the largest social experiment in history. We have never had this much change in such a short period of time, to the extent that young people are connecting with people all over the world. It requires all of us to increase our awareness and efforts and to work together, because no one can solve it on their own.

Baroness Kidron: Do you think that more work should be done by the sites that have hundreds of thousands of underage users, whether or not their parents tick or they lied about their age? One young boy said to me the other day, "How come they know that I want red sneakers but they do not know that I am 12?" That was a very valid question. Do you think that more resource and technology should be put in by those companies that say they do not have underage users but clearly do?

Baroness Shields: The very established companies are getting better at that and at recognising the patterns that kids use—the things that they say and the way in which they act—to figure out that they may be underage and to suspend accounts and various other things. The problem is that the more established platforms are the ones that we and their parents use. They do not use those any more—they use the more upstart types of products, which may not have the expertise or maturity of those companies that have those policies in place. The kids tend to go to the new—the bright, shiny object that everyone else is using. The more established platforms can identify young people who may be saying that they are an age that they are not.

There is so much opportunity in this area. Just last week, I was in China. We ran across a company called Musical.ly, which has 130 million users. I found its ethos very interesting. It has an ethos that says, "Do not judge me". I thought that was really interesting. There it is, building a product that says, "I am me. I am great. Do not judge me". It creates a certain ethos on the product that is different from that on other products. That is exciting. That is leadership. That is like saying, "We do not tolerate bullies here". There are some interesting developments.

Baroness Benjamin: We have "Don't drink and drive", especially at this time of the year. In the past, we had the Green Cross Code. Do you not think that there should be some sort of campaign of public awareness? If you are a responsible parent, you go to the school and find out what is going on, but there are other people who do not know or care—or even people without children themselves. Should some resources not be given to public awareness that you have on your screen and comes up, so that it becomes almost second nature to people that we should be aware of

and take part in this world that is evolving before us?

Baroness Shields: That is a brilliant idea.

Baroness Benjamin: So you will put money into it.

Baroness Shields: When you used to put money into an advertising campaign, there were three or four newspapers and a couple of television channels. Now it is so widespread that we almost need that kind of communication to come from the platforms themselves. That is where kids are spending their time.

Baroness Benjamin: I know. A lot of the people whom we have met have said that they are doing that. We have been to see Google and Virgin. Everybody says that they are doing lots of good things, but you have to be a user of that particular service to find out. I am talking about a general advert so that people become aware, such as "Clunk Click", which everybody used to say, or "Don't drink and drive"—do not do that.

Baroness Shields: "Stranger danger".

Baroness Benjamin: You need to have something that tells the public, so that it becomes second nature.

Baroness Shields: Of course—public service announcements.

Edward Timpson MP: We have done two recent national campaigns. One is the This Girl Can campaign, which is trying to encourage girls to feel that, if they want to play sport or to push the boundaries, they can. That has been hugely successful. We have also done one called the This is Abuse campaign, to highlight the fact that child abuse can happen anywhere and, if people are worried about it and want to make contact with a professional or to report it, to make very clear how they do that. There is always a place for a national campaign.

Through the UKCCIS board, we managed to cajole the four main internet service providers to commit to a significant sum of money to lead a campaign. However, we need to look at the impact of that and to consider whether we need to do something that is more of the ilk that you have described, because it can resonate in a different way. The response that you are getting is that we will take that away and look carefully at what we might be able to do.

Baroness Benjamin: Please.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: I want to ask you a very quick question on the back of that point. When you say "we", it is quite hard to know whether you mean "we, the Education Department", "we, the Department of Health" or "we, anybody else". The really important thing that is emerging—certainly in the research we are looking at and the evidence that we have seen—is that we need to know that when you say "we" you mean all of you. Each of you—not just you, obviously, but each department; you happen to be in front of us—must not only be aware of

what other departments are doing in this field but you must join up the dots and make a coherent campaign that goes right across, so that we are not saying, "This is a Department of Health issue, because it has public health in the title", or whatever the reason is, or, "This is an education issue, because it has schools involved in it". Can you tell us how much genuine collaboration and joint thinking goes on between your departments—and any other department of government—that will begin to create coherent policy around these issues and not just say, "This belongs with education. That belongs with health"?

Edward Timpson MP: First, we have a natural forum, through the UK Council for Child Internet Safety, for us to work not only across government but across the industry and the charitable sector. That has proved a very productive way of meshing all our collective effort, not just in government but much more widely. I can reassure you that we are not strangers. Joanna and I met yesterday—

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Not for the first time.

Edward Timpson MP: Not for the first time.

Baroness Shields: We co-chair the board.

Edward Timpson MP: That was the Inter-Ministerial Group on Child Sexual Abuse. There are lots of opportunities for us to work together on issues. As Joanna said, we cannot work in isolation. We can come up with a great initiative, but if no one else has bought into it and it is not complementary to what everyone else is doing, it will wither on the vine and you may get limited impact. We absolutely understand that message. Much as we would like to guarantee that the three of us will be here this time next year, we cannot. However, I think that that has resonated across government. The Prime Minister has a good track record of wanting to make sure that there is an inclusive government approach to these types of issues. I expect that to continue.

Q134 **Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury:** I have a question for Baroness Shields on the Digital Economy Bill. It is really a factual question, so that I can be absolutely clear in my own mind about what it is going to do. I have written it down, so that I get it absolutely correct. Will the Bill provide for ISPs to be legally required in certain circumstances to block websites? Is it the BBFC that will have the power to require ISPs to do that? Will any other body have that power as well? In what circumstances will they be required to block content?

Baroness Shields: To clarify, it was a manifesto commitment to ensure that age-inappropriate content—pornography—was not available to children under the age of 18. We were trying to harmonise the online world with the offline world. These proposals have been built into the Digital Economy Bill. The reason that the BBFC is involved is that the same types of ratings that we use to rate movies and films in the cinema should be applicable to this area. It is the right choice for that. Under the new Bill, it will contact a company that is delivering age-inappropriate

material, if it does not have age verification that is robust, and notify it of that. If, for whatever reason, government is not able to resolve that with the company, it will be recommended that the ISPs block that content.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: Recommended, not required.

Baroness Shields: It is required. If it does not offer age verification that is robust and suitable, it will be required.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: Under law.

Baroness Shields: That is right. That is what my honourable friend Matthew Hancock announced last night.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: The only regulator that will be able to do that will be the BBFC.

Baroness Shields: The BBFC is the body that will say that it does not comply.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: That is very helpful to know. As a supplementary: presumably, user-generated content that is uploaded cannot be blocked.

Baroness Shields: The Bill covers ancillary services. There was a question about Twitter. Twitter is a user-generated uploading-content site. If there is pornography on Twitter, it will be considered covered under ancillary services.

The Chairman: Perhaps we ought to ask about the audiovisual media services directive as part of this. Are you concerned that the provisions of the directive could potentially lower standards for video-on-demand content? Have you recommended, or will you recommend, changes to the directive to ensure that it does not lower standards?

Baroness Shields: We believe that the proposals in the audiovisual media services directive strengthen, rather than weaken, the requirement for protection of minors by extending the amount of material that is required to be restricted to minors. That includes a requirement to ensure that there are appropriate measures in place to protect minors from harmful content, proportionate to the potential harm, including age verification for pornography. The requirement in the proposal ensures that the most harmful content, including pornography, must be behind age verification tools and other technical measures. We believe that moving to the system proposed by the AVMSD will mean that far more content is placed behind restrictions on on-demand services—which, after all, is where children view most of their content. That will help to create a safer online environment for children.

So far in the negotiations with member states, they are supportive of the proposed changes to protect minors online. We would resist any suggestion of lowering the standards on age verification requirements. The proposals cannot lower the standards in the UK. Member states are

free to impose stricter measures on services in their jurisdiction than are required by the directive, hence our amendments to the Digital Economy Bill.

The Chairman: Thank you. We have got that on the record.

Q135 **Baroness Kidron:** We seem to have been told by almost everybody in the value chain on the industry side that self-regulation is a marvellous thing. We have been told by almost everybody else, whether it be academics, charities or teachers, that self-regulation is not sufficient, because we are seeing an ever-increasing number of children with some element of harm, risk or anxiety—however broadly you want to do it. From your perspective, is self-regulation working?

Baroness Shields: It is such a broad question.

Baroness Kidron: I know.

Baroness Shields: In this rapidly changing world, by the time you deliver legislation to two Houses of Parliament and get to Royal Assent, things have moved on dramatically. It takes a long time to regulate. The first choice is always to explain to the industry, “These are the problems that are created by people on, and technology used by, your platform”, to have those conversations and to impress upon it the importance of that. The ultimate hammer, of course, is regulation, but it takes a long time to move through that process.

We need to get to a place where we can express a concern and get a response. For instance, three years ago, we went to Google and Microsoft and explained, “When you search on your platforms, there is an auto-complete function. If you are searching for child sexual abuse imagery, you get an auto-complete and it is easier to find it”. The minute they saw that, they thought, “We are going to change that”. They went back and changed it. Then they started to look at the patterns in the search terms that people use and adjusted their technology to break the chain and the links to child sexual abuse content. We found from working with them—from opening up and sharing the problem with them—that the solution that they developed was far better than anything we could ever have legislated for. Now we feel that it is really hard to find this stuff on the open web. There are other challenges in peer-to-peer networks and the dark web, which we can go on to, but I wanted to illustrate how this co-operation works.

If we had developed legislation for this issue, we would have come up with something that was technologically inferior to what they developed. They developed something that was custom-tailored to the technology on their platform, so it works with their platform. Every provider needs to do the same. Microsoft did the same. The last statistic that I heard from Google was that it had an eightfold decrease in people searching for this content. That is a big improvement. We will never solve it completely, but the onus is on government to share the depth of the problem, to bring the evidence forward and to ask for solutions. If that does not work, it is

fully within the rights of government to go down the path of legislation, but we need to do a better job of explaining what we need. So far, when we have raised these issues, in general, we have got co-operation. We are having robust conversations on online extremism. We are getting far more co-operation than we could legislate for, because you cannot legislate for how to do this on everybody's platform.

Baroness Kidron: That is a fantastic answer. I want to ask two very precise questions around it. In that case, do you think that enough money, resource and attention is given from government to independent evaluation of what is going on, so that you can have these conversations in a very informed way? Secondary to that, one thing that we keep hearing from young people is that their concerns are nowhere in this conversation. Government is pursuing things on radicalisation, pornography and so on. In the meantime, they want to know about profiling and the right to be forgotten. Their feeling is that they have overwhelming amounts of information. They have all sorts of other issues. If you are going to guide these conversations, where is the children's voice in that—in a very real way, not in a tick-box way?

Baroness Shields: To take the first part of your question, we have much more power and influence when we bring a community together. WePROTECT having 73 countries, everybody involved and everyone saying the same thing raises this to a crescendo, where we get action. As I said earlier, we have been very successful so far—although we are nowhere near finished—in combatting child online abuse and exploitation. We have been reasonably successful in other areas as well.

However, you have to organise this in stacks and to have co-ordinated effort, because every Government tends to go to industry individually. It is death by 1,000 cuts, really. I remember working in industry and having 32 data protection officers. In Germany, they all had an issue at the same time. It was impossible for companies to prioritise and deal with these issues. It is incumbent upon us to organise and to deliver the highest-priority challenges in an effective way, with evidence. We need great academics—I am looking at Sonia—and their support to deliver a robust evidence base, so that we can show how this is harming people in society and what we need done. If you are not a technologist and do not know how the products work, that is far better than trying to come up with ideas or a solution yourself. A solution will never address the problem in the way in which it needs to be addressed, because you have to understand fundamentally how a particular product platform application chatbot works.

Nicola Blackwood MP: You have made an incredibly important point about the involvement of young people in the development of policy. One of the core principles that we have in the Department of Health—based on Future in Mind, which is about the future of young people's mental health—is what we call in our incredibly Department of Health jargony way "co-production of policy". Basically, it means that we include young people in the development of our mental health policy. I encourage the

Committee to look at the Youth Parliament Select Committee's report on young people's mental health, which was incredibly professional and put a lot of Select Committee reports from this place to shame. It included commentary on cyberbullying and a lot of other issues. We responded with a debate in Parliament, which was of very high quality. The emphasis that it put was on involving young people in development of policy, to make sure not only that their views were taken into account but that they were included in evaluation, rather than just left at the door once they had had the initial input. Sometimes, you need that as it goes along. I encourage you to look at that report.

Edward Timpson MP: For completeness, I alert the Committee to the fact—which you may already know—that the Children's Commissioner is doing a large piece of work with children and young people about what they want from the internet. It is an absolutely valid point that we should not assume that we know what sort of world they want to inhabit online. The more we can involve them in the development of where it goes next, the more likely it is that they will embrace it as something they have ownership of, rather than something that is done to them.

Baroness Shields: It would be brilliant to have a Youth Parliament on these issues. I would be happy to help you to organise that.

Baroness Kidron: There are a number of things going on. If I may, I will let all three of you know. There are various youth groups that are trying to organise around this. It would be wonderful if government policy reflected the views that they are expressing, which are quite different from our own views.

Baroness Shields: We need to do this in our country, but we also need to do it globally. We need to bring all that knowledge to the conversations that we have around safety on these platforms.

Baroness Benjamin: It is a world that we are all discovering together. It is about common sense, everybody's point of view and throwing your mind beyond the horizon and coming back. Far too often, we leave things and then react.

Baroness Shields: That is right.

Baroness Benjamin: We must think ahead and have that ability. It is great to listen to children's voices, but they do not necessarily know what the implications are. They do not have that experience or wisdom. Children may say, "I want chocolate and crisps every day of my life", but it is not good for them.

We also have to look at things differently, in a way that reflects what might happen. It takes wisdom and visionaries to come up with a solution that deals with the problem. As we all agree, this is new territory. It is like Christopher Columbus going across to find the new world. That is what we are after. Even though we have discovered things in between, we have not quite got there yet.

Nicola Blackwood MP: The Information Commissioner once gave evidence when I was a Select Committee Chair. He said, “It is not completely new territory. If you apply the principles of safety that you apply in the real world to the digital world, that is a very good, common-sense place to start”. You would not go into a tube station and give a stranger your home address. You would not take off all your clothes. You would not enter into conversation with big groups of people or go home with anybody. We have many more of the skills than we think we have. Sometimes, we talk ourselves out of the skills that we have by thinking that the innovative package everything is in means that we do not know how to keep ourselves and our children safe. If we applied some of the common-sense lessons that we all know from the real world to the digital world, we might find ourselves feeling a lot safer and calmer and less mentally stressed—says the Health Minister.

The Chairman: Very good.

- Q136 **Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall:** I can see that we are getting near the time limit. There is the whole issue of data protection, on which we touched in the last few minutes in relation to some of the things that have come up. You mentioned the question of how data is used and shared. The increased profiling by media companies of the people who use their resources opens up a whole range of possible vulnerabilities. Can you tell us quickly—or write to us subsequently—about where you think there is more work to be done on the issue of data protection specifically for children, particularly in relation to how they can be better equipped to understand what is being done with their data? That might include, for example, terms and conditions, which we all readily click on. I know that we all do it, but they do it. There may be more accessible ways—to use an overused word—of making clear to them what they were doing when they clicked on those. Also, do you have anything more to say about the role of the Information Commissioner’s Office in this area? Are there powers that reside there that could be strengthened? That is a lot to ask you when you have about two minutes left. If you cannot say it now, maybe you can write to us.

Baroness Shields: I have prepared answers to four questions on this. I would be happy to hand them over straightaway.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: It is the Chairman’s call, of course.

Baroness Shields: I will leave the door open. If you want to probe it further, you can get in touch with us.

The Chairman: That is very kind; thank you very much. We come to our final question, from Lord Caithness.

- Q137 **Earl of Caithness:** Minister, could you also write to us on what lessons you have learned from the work that the Australians and Canadians, in particular, have been doing? They have done a lot of good work.

Given everything that the three of you have said this afternoon, I think that you have made a very good case that there should be a one-stop-

shop in government, with one Minister, where all the information that you have imparted to us can be found. Will you implement that, please?

Baroness Shields: We will definitely take it back.

The Chairman: We talked about co-ordination earlier, but there is that point, too.

Earl of Caithness: Do you think that it is feasible? Is it a sensible proposal?

Edward Timpson MP: It is fair to say that Baroness Shields is the government Minister for Internet Safety. I do not remember there being a government Minister for Internet Safety, who was specifically tasked with that in government, until Baroness Shields came along.

Earl of Caithness: Understood.

Edward Timpson MP: Of course, there will always be other departments that need to feed into that role. That is where there has to be a cross-government approach.

Earl of Caithness: Should all this information not be collated in a one-stop-shop in government where everybody can get it?

Edward Timpson MP: The outward-facing body that we use in order to do that is the UKCCIS board. Joanna, myself and Sarah Newton from the Home Office co-chair that board. That is a place where it all comes together. We will take away the suggestion and see how it fits in with the machinery of government.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: It would be fair to say that that is not an aim that resonates widely among the public. I am sure that excellent work is being done—we know that it is—but it is partly about profile, is it not? Do you think that that body has the kind of profile now, or could develop the kind of profile, that would meet the challenge that has just been put down—of finding a one-stop-shop that people know about?

Edward Timpson MP: I have been on the board for over four years. It has gone through a number of iterations in that time. Initially, it was much more about liaising and working closely with the industry to try to improve our response to filtering, default systems and so on. We may be moving into a new phase, which is why we now have an education group and a digital resilience group. We are looking at how we can be more outward facing as a board—not just as government, but as others who will come into contact with parents, schools and other parts of the community—so that a clear and single message comes out of that. As for government more widely, Joanna does an excellent job of articulating what the Government's view is. We will continue to make sure that we support her in doing that.

Baroness Quin: There is something that I want to raise. Again, perhaps you can write to us about it if you have any further thoughts. When we

met young people today, one of the messages that came over to me very clearly was their concern that, if you put something online unwisely at a really young age, you get saddled with it forever after, even to the extent that it may affect your future employment prospects. I know that we have not discussed the right to be forgotten much, but I wonder whether there is something particular that can be done around that subject to protect young people under a certain age.

The Chairman: Do you want to have a quick go at that one, Joanna?

Baroness Shields: Yes, quickly. We have talked a lot about digital resilience, whether it makes sense to build that into the curriculum and how we accomplish that. I take your point about people not being aware of UKCCIS. We need to raise the profile of the organisation, because the work that it is doing is multi-stakeholder, co-ordinated work. It is looking at this very issue—how we explain the issues to young people so that they can make informed choices and go out into the world with the digital independence that they need to relax, to lose the anxiety and to be confident in going forward in their lives. It is a huge issue. It could not be more important at this moment in time. I have a 17 year-old son, so I know exactly what you mean. This is what they are concerned about.

Baroness Kidron: I do not want to end on a difficult note. I know that UKCCIS does remarkable work and has wonderful people in it, but one slight issue that I have is that some of the things young people are asking for—for example, a one-stop-shop to report abuse, to get answers and all of that—are things that industry is somewhat reluctant to do, for all sorts of brand reasons. If the Government only have UKCCIS, where they all sit, where is the pressure from government on industry? Where is the answer for those young people on some of the things that they want, which fundamentally attack the business model and say, “Hey, we need a little bit more insurance and care about our childhood”? There is a slight complication about where government sits with industry and where government policy is separate from industry.

Baroness Shields: I understand.

The Chairman: We may not be able to resolve that immediately.

Baroness Shields: If a young person has a particularly problematic piece of content and it is on multiple platforms, it is heartbreaking that they have to go through the resolving mechanism and to contact each company individually to report it. That is really tough. It is not fair.

Baroness Kidron: Yes.

Nicola Blackwood MP: One of the challenges that we have had historically is that the evidence base around the mental health impacts is not strong enough. That is why the prevalence study is really important, so that we have that robust and unarguable evidence base.

Baroness Shields: That is right.

Nicola Blackwood MP: Around cyberbullying and bullying, in particular, one concern that we have in the department is about the sense of no escape, which has been linked to higher suicide and self-harm rates. It used to be that if you were bullied in one school you could leave, go to another school and leave it behind. You cannot really do that now. However, if we do not have the robust evidence base, it is very difficult to make arguments that are perhaps commercially difficult. I know that I keep talking about it, but I think that that will be a real game changer going forward.

Baroness Shields: When will it be finished?

Nicola Blackwood MP: In 2018.

The Chairman: Great. It is 5 pm. We went way over time. We are extremely grateful to you for staying with us and sharing all those thoughts. Telling us that we are part of the largest social experiment in history is wonderful, but you also made the point that all of us must up our game in relation to children. That is a fundamental point that was clearly shared by all three of you. Thank you very much for joining us and keeping us safe.