

Petitions Committee

Oral evidence: Tackling online abuse, HC 364

Thursday 2 July 2020

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Members present: Catherine McKinnell (Chair); Tonia Antoniazzi; Martyn Day; Chris Evans; Katherine Fletcher; Nick Fletcher; Theresa Villiers.

Questions 14 - 60

Witnesses

[I](#): Amy Price and Katie Price.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Amy Price and Katie Price.

Q14 Chair: Thank you very much indeed for joining us today. This is our second session looking into online abuse and how it can be tackled. At our first session, we heard from Bobby Norris, the reality TV star of “The Only Way is Essex”, who started two petitions about online abuse. Following that session, we have announced an inquiry into the issue.

We are going to look at the scale and impact of online abuse on internet users, including disabled people, the LGBT+ community and other minority groups, and the Government’s proposals to tackle the issue, including the Online Harms White Paper and legal and technological solutions that we could look at to take action against people who commit online abuse.

As a result of the terrible abuse that you, Katie, and Harvey suffered online, your petition calling for a new criminal offence for online abuse and a register of offenders received more than 200,000 signatures in just a matter of days in 2017. That led to the Committee’s inquiry into online abuse and the experience of disabled people. That is informing this new inquiry as well.

Katie and Amy both gave evidence to the Committee in 2018. We are really delighted to be able to have you back, to be able to speak to you and find out how, if at all, things have progressed, and talk with you about what more needs to be done.

Before we start our questions, I ask you both to introduce yourselves, please.

Katie Price: I am Katie Price. Harvey Price is my son. I am here to protect him and speak for him, because he is not able to do that.

Amy Price: I am Kate’s mum and Harvey’s grandmother. I support both of them as much as I can.

Q15 Chair: Thank you. A very warm welcome back to the Petitions Committee. Obviously, this time it is in a slightly different form. Since the last time you appeared before us, a lot of new Members have joined the Committee.

Katie, before we ask you some specific questions about your experience, could you tell us a little bit about the online abuse that you and Harvey have faced?

Katie Price: Obviously, through the years, if you didn’t know, I get a lot of trolling and online abuse. The difference is that I am able to speak out myself and try to protect myself, not that I should have to have online abuse—it shouldn’t happen. I have five children, but it is particularly my son, Harvey. He was born with different disabilities. He gets lots of racial abuse—the most disgusting, despicable things. He gets memes made



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about him and TikTok stories, Vines and posters. You name it: it is anything. He gets mocked in such a serious and disgusting way.

There has to be some justice. Even people in the public eye do it. For example, recently three police officers mocked Harvey. Since then, one of them has retired before they could even get a hearing. Another one left the police. The other one has been moved to a different duty. To be honest, they should be on a register for it. Now, if they go for another job, no one is going to know that that is really why they are not in the police force.

The other person was Ben Stokes, the England cricket captain, or at least I think he still is. He did a video mocking Harvey. These are public figures. It was all over the media. Then he wanted to meet Harvey. He got his lawyers involved. I am like, "No, because you shouldn't have done it anyway. You should be setting an example."

Channel 4 let out Frankie Boyle, the comedian, who said disgusting things about Harvey raping me and that was the only reason I was going out with a cage fighter. That was even though Channel 4 was representing the Paralympics in the ad breaks. How could they advertise that but let a comedian mock disability? I asked for an apology from them but never got one. I asked for one from Frankie Boyle but never got one.

These are people in the public eye. Just because they are comedians as well, it does not mean to say that they should mock him. From that, the fans of Frankie Boyle go on Twitter and start backing him up. They start abusing Harvey, so it is like a chain of it.

Now you have TikTok. I am seeing people doing videos on TikTok and taking the mickey out of Harvey. Nothing is in place for that. On Instagram, so many people send me stuff about what people are doing. You can report them, but they don't get banned, or they might get closed down and open up again. There are no consequences in place.

I think I said last time that I had two people arrested. The police seized all their equipment and stuff, but there was nothing in place. Because no one is seeing consequences, it's never going to stop. I know we are going to talk about social media because I have probably said a lot of stuff with the questions, but I think there have to be some kind of consequences with social media.

I am sure a lot of you there might have family, friends or anything with some kind of bullying or trolling. It shouldn't be accepted. I know we are all allowed freedom of speech and we are all quite matter of fact, but you know when you are crossing that line. I think that, until something is put in line, it is just going to keep happening. More people are committing suicide. I am here about Harvey with his disability and racism, but it is just getting worse. It is on a wider spectrum.



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As I say, we all know it has got to become law. That is what we need to decide. If it doesn't this time, I will keep fighting so it does. When does it become a criminal offence? That is what we need to justify. How far does someone have to go before there are consequences? That is the hard thing to do. It is easy to say, "Oh, if they call Harvey" what they call him. I don't want to say it because it is so offensive. They know they shouldn't be saying it. They should be punished.

If you went for a job and you really liked this person, but then you know they have been on this charge, they have been abusing someone or racially abusing someone, you would look at them twice. You wouldn't want to take them on, would you? At the moment there are people out there like that, who might look professional and are doing these jobs, but they are just keyboard warriors. So something needs to be done.

It is not fair on Harvey. Luckily, he doesn't understand but I do, and his siblings do. It affects them now. Their friends at school start picking on them because they notice it. The way they get to my kids is, "Well, your brother is like this; you're like that." I would like to say what names he is called but I don't think it is necessary. I think you can justify the impact; I am saying it is disgusting.

Even when I went to sell a car on eBay, it made all the media. That was not because of the car but because of the disgusting comments I had on eBay. People were saying, "Oh, has Harvey dribbled on the back seat?" That was just innocent, selling a car. What has that got to do with Harvey? So from every angle now he is getting abuse.

I wanted to treat him normally; he should be the same as everyone else. I opened him up an Instagram account. Touch wood, everyone is really nice to him on there, but it's just people on other accounts who are not. It is just because of his disabilities. He has a right to be on these social events. Some people say to me, "Well, why would you put him out there?" Well, why can't I? Why should he be treated any differently? Why can't he have Instagram? Why can't he have TikTok? That is the way forward now. Social media is the way forward. Why should Harvey be hidden away, and why should he be called these names because he does do stuff?

He has autism. Harvey is now an ambassador for an autism charity, and I am proud of him. When people have disabilities, it doesn't matter what colour or race you are. Everyone deserves to be treated the same. I just think that online the trolling is so bad. It is ridiculous, and something has to be done.

Amy Price: Can I say something?

Q16 **Chair:** Amy, I was going to ask you, but I wanted to follow up first on something that Katie said there. It is interesting that you say that it is getting worse and not better. That is one of the big worries that a lot of people face.



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You say that you are not going to be bullied and harassed off social media— why should you? —and nor should Harvey. Is it something that you and Harvey still enjoy using, or does the level of abuse make it no longer enjoyable for you and Harvey?

Katie Price: People have to realise that any of us like praise. If you do something good, we like praise. Harvey loves playing the keyboard and showing his pictures. He always says, “Put it on Instagram.” I read him out the comments because he doesn’t understand. I say, “Harvey, they say your pictures are amazing,” and this and that. It is the praise. He gets excited. Why should that be taken away from him?

His brothers and sisters are in the room. They have TikTok. He does hear what you are saying. Just because he doesn’t speak how we do, he still does understand things, although he doesn’t understand what people call him, plus I do not show him. He wouldn’t understand what the offence means, but why should he stop doing it? Why should I be told that I can’t let him enjoy that when other people do? Why can’t I showcase him?

If someone has a talent, they go on TV and show their talent. In a work office you get bonuses if you do well. Everything is different, but why should Harvey be any different? I am not going to sit here and hide him away, when I am proud of him. I am proud of the man he has become and want him to be treated the same as everyone else.

The impact that it does have on Junior and Princess, especially, is disgusting. Junior is now sticking up for him, but why should he have to stick up for him? It shouldn’t be happening in the first place. If you report someone on social media, the people behind social media are not stupid. They should agree and say, “This is disgusting. They need to be banned.”

As I have said before, if you go and get a mortgage, a car on HP, bank credit or whatever anyone wants, they want to know your name and address. They do credit checks and this and that. It is simple. Why can’t they do it on social media, so that if someone is being abusive then you have their address and you can find them? All that happens is they get deleted off, and they open up another account. There is not enough protection.

I guarantee that if someone did the research and found out how many more people have committed suicide since 2017, when we started this, you would find that the media has a big impact. Although they support my charity, it even comes on the media. If things are written in the media, people then go on social media and write stuff. Then they end up committing suicide. It is all these keyboard warriors, because they wouldn’t say it to your face.

This is the point. When I take Harvey out, he has so much respect from people. There is never anyone who ever says anything bad. He is so loved. Yet, online, he looks like a different person. He gets abuse all the



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time. He does get a lot of people who love him, but I am sick of it as well and it becomes draining.

I ended up going in the Priory at the beginning of this year because of the bullying and the trolling. We are only human. I can see how people end up committing suicide and stuff like that. It all goes down to mental health as well. It is not just bullying. Think of what the bullying and the trolling does. It causes mental health issues. It is not hard. It is an easy law that should be put into place.

Q17 Chair: It is the anonymity of being online that creates many of the challenges.

Amy, I was going to come to you because I know you wanted to add something to what Katie has already said. Harvey has turned 18 this year. This has been something that you have had to face for quite some time. Do you want to share the impact it has had on you as a family and a wider unit?

Amy Price: Going back to what Kate said about the article about the British Transport Police, and how they have managed to escape any consequences whatsoever, the problem is that the police have no laws or anything to challenge or put forward. As Kate said about these three officers, one has retired, one actually left the police force and the other one had a formal warning. If you think about it, the ones that have left could do it again. They have done that so they could get away with it. They are never named, so no one would ever know.

The whole point is that something has got to be done to stop that happening. They should be recognised, and I think there should be a register.

As regards Harvey now turning 18, he is a man now and I think he is entitled to use all the things that Kate has said. But there have to be guidelines, even for Harvey, like there are with younger children. He doesn't actually understand, and he is very vulnerable. People can take advantage of that vulnerability. I remember that when you did your study—

Katie Price: It is protecting Harvey's rights, basically.

Amy Price: Yes. If I remember, it was saying that people make friends of children and people with disabilities to con money out of them or to try to have sex with them. You could groom someone on the internet like Harvey, so there have to be guidelines in place. There has to be more done about it now because of the lockdown. As Kate said, there are people with mental health problems, and it is just too much of a free-for-all. Something has to be sorted about it now.

Katie Price: There are lots of people who will laugh at Harvey but not with him. Why should people laugh at him and not with him? The regulations and stuff just all have to be done. I am not giving up.



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Everyone I speak to recognises that, whether they love me or hate what I do, this is nothing to do with me. There are so many people who are actually behind this. Loads of people are suffering in different ways from online bullying and trolling. It has to be in place because it is the way forward.

Look at us all now because of this coronavirus. We are more all online with Zoom chats, and this and that. People are bored at home. They are thinking, "What can I do? Oh, I'm bored. I'm having a depressing time, so I might as well go and troll someone else." It is getting a lot worse; it really is.

You could see even in a few days the amount of signatures we had. You know this is a law that is wanted, but it is how we do it. There is no way it can't become a law. It is silly. It is virtual bullying, basically.

Q18 **Chair:** It can go both ways. It can start online and move into the real world, or it can start in the real world and become unmanageable online. Trying to connect the two worlds is part of the challenge that we have.

Katie Price: It does affect everyone.

Q19 **Chair:** I was going to ask about Harvey's role as ambassador for the autism awareness charity. I know that you mentioned he has raised money. I think he has raised about £12,000 online during this Covid pandemic for NHS charities. Has that been a positive thing, or has he received some online trolling and abuse as a result of doing that work?

Katie Price: Yet again, I think it is amazing that Harvey didn't realise. At Gatwick airport they support an autism charity, and he is obsessed with trains. He has his picture up at Gatwick airport. It is so nice when I go past and see his picture up. He doesn't realise. Not everyone has that chance. He has only done that through him and his personality.

It is the same with the t-shirts he made for the NHS. His little face, when I showed him the drawing that he did on a t-shirt, I said, "Do you know what, Harvey? These t-shirts are going to help lots of people like you." It was just his smile. No, he didn't get any abuse for that. Why would he? It is something good. Why would he get abuse for it? It just goes to prove that just because you have disabilities you can do a good deed. It was something he did well, and he did that himself. It was amazing for him.

The impact that Harvey does have on other people is massive. There are a lot of people out there with disabilities who do hide away because they do get bullied and stared at. People are always interested. If you are in a shop or Harvey kicks off, or there is someone with disabilities, I actually feel like I want to go up to the parent and give them a pat on the back and say, "Do you know? I know how hard and challenging it was for you to come out?", but I don't want to be patronising. I think people don't realise that a lot of families get affected because they don't want to go out because they are worried what people will think of them.



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It is the same online. I just want to help to protect everyone out there I can. It is not even about the racism, disability, whether you are gay or straight; you get trolled and bullied for all sorts of things. Obviously, I started it because of Harvey. So many different people come to me and say, "Please help. I hope this law happens." It is definitely needed.

I'm sorry that I'm talking so much.

Chair: No; it is all right. I was going to bring Katherine in to ask you some questions.

Katie Price: Hi, Katherine.

Q20 **Katherine Fletcher:** Well done, madam.

Katie Price: Thank you.

Katherine Fletcher: This is exactly what we need to hear.

Katie Price: I should become an MP myself, because you can't get a word in with me.

Katherine Fletcher: I will buy you a pint if that happens; well done. You might not get a word in with me either, to be fair. You might have met your match on that one.

Seriously, you have been at it a couple of years and you have been doing great stuff. Has anything changed? There is some awareness of this now. Is there a change in the amount of abuse he is getting or in the type? Everything you have just mentioned is absolutely abhorrent. You would hope that with normal people in the world this is starting to tail off a bit.

Katie Price: No. The only thing that has changed is that I have made people more aware that I am doing this law. More people are aware because I am doing everything, but as for Harvey, no, it has encouraged trolls. It is like, "Ha, ha, you haven't got us yet, so we'll carry on." You have these—I can never say it right—memes, what they do.

Katherine Fletcher: Memes.

Katie Price: There—you know more than me. There is more of this stuff, because more things are being made. Because Harvey does say these funny, witty things, they turn it into these videos. They are laughing at him, not with him. This is the difference.

Amy Price: And they do t-shirts.

Katie Price: The good thing about the media is that if I try to name and shame some of these people, which I try not to do because some people want that—what did you say there, mum?

Amy Price: About the t-shirts.

Katie Price: Yes; the t-shirts. A company, because of a comment that Harvey made, made loads of t-shirts with Harvey's picture on it with the



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comment he made. They made loads of money out of it, but they are mocking Harvey. There is a lot of support behind this, but at the same time Harvey is still getting trolled. People think it's funny.

Q21 **Katherine Fletcher:** So the volume is not dropping.

Katie Price: No; it has got worse. He gets a lot of it from football fans. They call him a gorilla. I am not saying everything that they call him on here, because—

Katherine Fletcher: Things do not need repeating.

Katie Price: This is what I mean. You can think of things that are said verbally. I am not going to say it all. Everyone is like, "Oh my God." It should be treated the same when it is written, but it's not. People are more shocked when it is verbal.

Q22 **Katherine Fletcher:** You are totally right. If I understand you rightly, what you are saying is that we need a specific offence about online because it is a different world, and it is completely different from walking up to someone in the street. It is quite a big thing to police what people are saying and doing. You might end up in some kind of fancy novel like "Nineteen Eighty-Four". People are worried about it.

What is the public reaction to it? Do you get a sense that normal people, not the trolls, are actually saying, "Yes, something needs to happen about this"?

Katie Price: This is the thing. It is normal people doing it. You could meet someone who is so nice and not realise that they are actually a troll.

Q23 **Katherine Fletcher:** I am doing it badly in a northern accent. What I am getting at is, are people who are not trolls supportive? Are you getting people saying, "Yes"?

Katie Price: Yes, because it is not just for Harvey. There are people that they know. Who wouldn't be behind it? I don't understand anyone who would not be behind it. If you are protecting suicides and mental health, I do not understand anyone who would sit here and say, "This isn't a good thing."

Like I say, in this country or any country we are vetted in so many different ways, but social media and online stuff is not vetted. Social media and stuff are causing a lot of problems. You notice it in different ways. Even MPs get trolled. Do you understand what I mean? Everyone gets affected by it. It is something that should be done. I bet not one of you guys sitting here would think, "This is a rubbish law to make."

Q24 **Katherine Fletcher:** If I give you a magic wand, is it basically a register of people who are then not allowed to go on the internet? Is that where you are going?



Katie Price: For example, my daughter is 13. She wanted to go on TikTok. All her friends are on it. Because she was in the public eye and they knew she was 13, they took her TikTok down. They did that and closed it, yet they are still keeping up stuff about Harvey being bullied and trolled. They would take that down and say, "Oh, we're not following the policy. You have to be 13," but do you think it is right to still let all this abuse happen? It is not just Harvey; it is everyone. Why don't you take that down, if that is your policy? Do you know what I mean?

Amy Price: When we were talking about a register—if I remember correctly—we were trying to put the onus back on the social media companies to do something in trying to police the internet, but they are not going to do all of it; it is impossible. There are no actual laws in place because all the laws are out of date regarding social media. The only way you can really get to people—

Katie Price: It is if there is a consequence.

Amy Price: —is if there a consequence for their action. If there was a register where their names were put on it, and they were named and shamed, in the future, if they want to get work or a job, an employer can look at this register and see this person's name. They can say, "Is this a person of good character?" and see they have been abusing people.

Katherine Fletcher: Thank you; that is really clear.

Amy Price: It is that kind of thing, you know. Like you have a sex offenders register, they could go on this register, because then there is a consequence. They know that, if they do something, something can happen for their behaviour.

Katie Price: It is like the police. You get fined for speeding or something. There should be some kind of penalty or something for trolls. There has got to be something, but at the moment there is nothing. There is absolutely nothing in place. So no wonder it is getting worse. People think it is funny to show it to their friends. Like I say, there is not even a penalty. There is no punishment. All right, they might get taken off if you report them a certain amount of times. Then they will close their account down, but then they will open another one or open up a new email address, open it in another name and carry on.

Katherine Fletcher: Ladies, that is really clear. Keep going, and well done.

Chair: I am going to bring Martyn in, who has a few questions for you.

Katie Price: Hi, Martyn.

Q25 **Martyn Day:** It is nice to see you again. I remember the evidence you gave in 2018. I visited an organisation in Glasgow, and what struck me at the time was that every single person there had been abused online, so it



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really is quite widespread. At the time you told us that when you reported online abuse to the social media companies nothing happened—

Katie Price: Nothing.

Q26 **Martyn Day:** And that things that were posted just remained there, and you would not even hear back from them. Is this still the case, or has it improved?

Katie Price: Nothing has improved. It has got worse. There is nothing; absolutely nothing. As I said to you, because people know of my daughter's TikTok—and I am using TikTok because these are social media things—her friends who are 12 are still on it, but because my daughter is in the public eye TikTok made a point of deleting her account because she wasn't 13. Yet all her friends haven't been deleted. They are mocking my son on there for his disability, but they keep that on there. The rules are back to front on how it is all working. It is all proving points on things, but they still let the disgusting things go on.

We all know it is how you punish them. How far does it have to go? I think that is what we need to establish. We all know that there needs to be something there. It is stupid for it not to be.

Q27 **Martyn Day:** When we heard from Facebook, Google and Twitter back in 2018, they said that everybody at that time would now get a response to their complaints. Has this been your experience since then?

Katie Price: It is absolute rubbish. They start it again in a different name, or their friends will come and say, "Oh, do you think because you knocked my friend down you are going to stop us doing it?" That is what happens.

Amy Price: What he means is, did you get any reaction when you put complaints forward?

Katie Price: No.

Q28 **Martyn Day:** Nothing from the social media companies to the complaints.

Katie Price: No. My Facebook got hacked for two years by a stalker, and it has taken me two years to even get that back. They haven't replied to anything about abuse, no. It took them two years for me to get that back, and we had evidence and proof of that. We had evidence, addresses and numbers of people to say they weren't really me. That took two years, yet on the Harvey stuff no one actually seems to care. Whether they care or not—well, they obviously don't, because they are not putting anything in place. How hard can it be to get people's details, to ask them to do it?



Q29 **Martyn Day:** I was going to ask if the responses you were receiving from the companies were good enough, but clearly from your evidence they are not.

Katie Price: No. If I do name and shame them, the media do pick up on them and they are on my side to help. Like I said, they did it with Ben Stokes. They did it with Frankie Boyle. They did it with my comments on Channel 4. I do have a voice out there. Luckily, it doesn't matter what people think of me as a person. I am in a situation to be able to voice it and to be able to start making online trolling a criminal offence. I will continue to do it, but now something has to be done with it because it's pretty obvious that it needs to be done. They just need to step up. They have to step up; they have to.

Q30 **Martyn Day:** Thank you for that comment. Are the social media companies removing any of the offensive comments that you flag up to them?

Katie Price: You report it, but then you never hear back. You can have a report where you can unfollow this person or report them. You report them but you never hear back, or you still see them up there. How many reports do they need to have?

Amy Price: That is why I think there has to be something else in place.

Katie Price: Something against virtual bullies. They are virtual bullies. If you are bullying in the street you get arrested, taken to the police, put in a cell and get done for GBH or whatever you've done. But online or virtually there is nothing. There is absolutely nothing to punish you.

Amy Price: I will give you an example of what happened recently, and I was quite horrified about it as well. It is not about Harvey. It is about Mina Smallman and her two daughters—the ones who were found murdered in the park. Two police officers went along and took photos of the girls' bodies and put it on their social media.

Katie Price: Yes; that happened with me and my horse. My horse got killed outside my house. This is what I mean about this. My dog as well; both of them. I didn't know that my dog, Princess's dog, got run over and killed outside my house. How did I find out? The media, because people took pictures of the dog and put it on Facebook, saying, "Does anyone recognise this dog? It looks like Katie Price's dog." I found out because someone took a picture of my dead dog and put it on social media.

It was the same with my horse outside my house. I have just had bad luck with that house, by the way. I am not living there now. A car smashed into it, and instead of people helping my horse they are stopping and taking pictures of it. It went everywhere. I am like, "What do you mean? My horse has been killed." I didn't even know. It was because people took pictures of the car, put it on Facebook and then



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everyone is talking about it. I didn't even know. Why would someone want to take a picture of my horse or my dog?

Amy Price: Can you imagine how that mother must have felt to see that pictures of her dead daughters had been circulated by policewomen? Cressida Dick apologised, but what are going to be the consequences of that when the police are even doing it themselves?

Q31 **Chair:** I think that case is under investigation at the moment, so we will wait and see what happens.

Amy Price: But it is still the same kind of thing. It is on social media.

Q32 **Chair:** People do things online that they would not otherwise ever necessarily do.

Amy Price: Exactly. This is what I mean. There are no consequences. That is the problem. Everyone thinks they can get away with it. It is wrong.

Q33 **Martyn Day:** That is very much the case, is it not? Do you think that the social media companies are getting to the root of the problem and removing the abusive users?

Katie Price: No; they are not. They are 100% not. We are still here, and it has been two or three years. We are still fighting for it. Nothing has been done. There are more suicides, more mental health issues, and there is more abuse. In fact, I think the language on there now is getting worse because people know they can get away with it.

Martyn Day: Thank you very much. That is the end of my questions. It has been very helpful.

Q34 **Chris Evans:** Hi, Kate, how are you? Are you all right?

Katie Price: Hi.

Chris Evans: How is Harvey? I understand that he has been ill in the last couple of days. Is he okay?

Katie Price: Yes. That is the thing with Harvey. Luckily, he could speak more. He had chest pains, but because he said it felt like needles I didn't want to take a risk. I am not one of these people who will just call an ambulance for the sake of it because I don't want to waste people's time. Obviously, with Harvey and his condition we did. He has fluid on his lungs. It is like a chest infection, but it is not coronavirus or anything like that because I haven't been anywhere.

I had to put something out first. This is another thing. I know it is part of my job, but even Harvey got papped doing it. At the hospital, people will just take pictures of him and put them online. There is not even privacy. They shouldn't be allowed to be able to do stuff like that. That is another law of mine that I am going to be doing.



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Q35 **Chris Evans:** I also noticed a few trolls when I was going through your Twitter account, when you said he was better. It is unbelievable. In my own job I have seen how casual people are about disability abuse. It is absolutely disgraceful.

Katie Price: I put pictures up of Harvey, but people notice that sometimes he never has a top on. I have put up links about why he doesn't. It is a known fact that anyone with autism doesn't like to have clothes on, or they want to be naked. Obviously, Harvey is 18 and I am like, "Harvey, you need to put your pants on." With most pictures of Harvey that I put out, he has no top on. People are like, "Why would you do that to him? He is fat." I am like, "Well, if you google this, it is actually an autism thing and he won't put his top on." That is Harvey. That is an autism trait.

Why should I even have to justify it? Then he gets bullied for that. I know he is big. People say to me, "Why do you feed him all this food?" He is big because of the way he is, but why should I have to justify it? It is no one's business. If there is a woman who is big, or a different shape, why do people have to justify it?

Q36 **Chris Evans:** The big issue that I am picking up from you, Kate, is the fact that the social media platforms are not very good at taking up your complaints. Do you think, if the Government started imposing massive fines on the social media companies, they would clean their act up pretty quickly?

Katie Price: Definitely. There need to be fines in place. There need to be consequences in place. Unfortunately, it is getting worse and nothing is happening. People have to know that it is going to hit their pocket. Everyone moans about their money with parking fines and stuff, so people have now learned to put a ticket on. If there is a consequence online, people will think, "Oh, actually, I'd better be careful what I write because I could either be fined or I'll be on a register, and if I go for a job, oh sugar, I'd better not do it because it might show up."

It might take time to get into place, and it might not stop everything, but it might make people start thinking, "Maybe I shouldn't do this."

Amy Price: As you said with the companies, they should have massive fines themselves because they are not doing what they should be doing, but there again you have to put in place with them what they should be doing. That is the problem, isn't it? Do they have guidelines given to them?

Q37 **Chris Evans:** Social media companies are basically run on advertising; businesses give them money to put their ads on there. A lot of them have charitable organisations. They are large companies or charitable organisations giving money out as well. How do you stop them and get the message over to them to stop giving money to social media platforms, which are like a wild west of abuse?



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Amy Price: I suppose you have got to look at what has happened to Facebook at the moment, where they have lost a lot of their main advertisers. It is going to affect their pockets, so then they are going to have to do something. Maybe it is the same kind of thing with consequences with the social media companies.

Katie Price: It is the social media's responsibility to start controlling this. Like I say, it has been three years since we started this—three years or two years. Nothing is in place. Social media has to step up. Everything now is going online. Soon there will be no newspapers. There will probably be no shops eventually. Everything is online. The way a lot of people communicate is online now. They have to stop funding all these social media things. You know like when people are trying to do adverts. I know what I am trying to say; I can't say it, but you know what I mean.

Q38 **Chris Evans:** A lot of these companies are US companies. When you speak to them they say that something in the US is not offensive, but it is very offensive in the UK and they cannot police it. Have you come across that? Is this abuse across the world, or is it UK-based and based on your image within the media? What is it?

Katie Price: It is across the world; of course, it is. Lately with the thing that happened in America—that poor guy George—that went absolutely everywhere. Luckily, people got done for that and there were consequences in place, because everyone went into uproar about it because it was disgusting. This is what I mean. Things like this happen every day, and there should be consequences for it. They did name where the police officer lived. I am glad they did do that because he needed to be punished, and now he is. It might make other police officers in America think twice about how they treat people.

I have seen programmes as well, and then they show it on telly. Everyone has just got to up it. Social media have a big question they need to ask themselves to help the situation. It is a big thing. They make so much money from advertising and stuff like that, so now they should be responsible and put some of that money into vetting people before they can have an account. If they have been on a register, they should be banned from all social media. It must be addressed. All of it has got to be addressed.

Q39 **Chris Evans:** What I am concerned about is that if somebody is based in the US and they are trolling you, and then they go on the list, are they going to hide behind it and say they are on the list in the UK but they are all right to have a US account, or a German account, or a French account? That would be my concern about that.

Katie Price: This is my point. You have laws in different countries. I am starting with this country. It happens worldwide, but what I am doing in this country is making Harvey's Law. This is another thing. On Instagram or Facebook, you get people from all round the world doing it. Facebook is massive—it is worldwide—so they can control it. I want to do



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something like Harvey's Law in every single country. Facebook, overall, is everywhere anyway, so they should vet. The vetting should be the same worldwide. It should be addressed worldwide anyway.

Q40 **Chris Evans:** So this needs to be an international effort rather than just a national effort.

Katie Price: Yes, against bullying. It should be done.

Q41 **Chris Evans:** What you are saying is very interesting, but I know others want to come in. The last question from me is, have you had any engagement with these social media companies?

Katie Price: The last one was Facebook, when my Facebook got hacked for two years. It affected me because this person—and I knew who the person was and had all the evidence—was putting damaging stuff up about me. It wasn't even me, and people believed it was me. It is only now that we have got it back from them. People hack into my accounts and make stuff up.

The one thing I will say is that it doesn't matter what job I do—no one deserves to be trolled. I am glad that I have done the job because for 25 years this will be the best thing I have ever done because it means I am helping people. I am all about helping people. Obviously, we do need social media and small businesses because you have growing businesses now, and it is a platform and it helps everyone, but with the trolling thing you have just got to treat it like the world. That is the virtual way, and if you do something wrong you will be punished because that is what we are like in this world. In the virtual world it should be treated the same: punished, penalty, criminal offence, register—the lot.

Q42 **Chris Evans:** When you spoke to Facebook, did you speak to senior management or just a complaints handler? How high up were they?

Katie Price: Quite high up, yes, but it took ages to get up there. It was the same when I put my car on eBay. They were in Germany. They contacted us and said that they had to take the car down offline because there was too much abuse about Harvey.

The thing about eBay is that they have people on there. They get staff to see if they are good at selling and stuff, so they do have details of these people. I gave it to the police. We printed out all the people who abused Harvey and gave it to the police. Although the policemen were disgusted, they said, "Kate, there's nothing we can do because there is nothing in place. How can we punish them? What do you want us to do? We can only say, 'Oh, you're so naughty; don't do that again.'" That was just over a car. People have to use social media responsibly.

Q43 **Chris Evans:** Obviously, these social media companies will be coming before this Committee. If you were sitting in our position questioning them, what would be the one question you would want to ask them?



Katie Price: What, for you guys?

Chris Evans: If you were sitting where we are sitting, and we were questioning them.

Katie Price: First of all, I think schools should be taught about kids—

Amy Price: He means the social media companies.

Katie Price: What would I say to them?

Amy Price: What would you say to them?

Katie Price: Right. When you get a car, you want to know our ins and outs; our address; how long we have lived there; our phone numbers; next of kin; this and that, like hospitals. It should be the same. It can't be hard. Proof of ID: take a picture of your passport, proof of address, date of birth, email, number. It is simple—four things to identify that person.

Amy Price: What would you say to the social media company about policing it?

Katie Price: What are they going to do to step it up? They should tell us. What are you going to put in place to step it up? I am telling them. It is not hard: photo ID, address, your age and then, "What are you going to do to step it up, because this can't go on?"

Q44 **Nick Fletcher:** Hello, Katie, and hello, Amy.

Katie Price: Hi, Nick.

Nick Fletcher: I have obviously read the briefing, and I have seen some of the images and tweets. It is absolutely disgusting. I just cannot understand how anybody would say and write the things that they do. It is absolutely disgusting. It is really bad. I am with you on this; there are no two ways about it. I think it is disgraceful.

I believe that Harvey is a football fan. I am a new MP, but at the last Committee hearing there was an inquiry because, apparently, an awful lot of this abuse was coming from sports fans. Is that right?

Katie Price: Yes. They call him a gorilla and all sorts.

Q45 **Nick Fletcher:** Are you still having problems with that now?

Katie Price: Yes, majorly. They put pictures up of gorillas and then compare him to gorillas and stuff like that, or chant. There is a guy called Dapper Laughs, who was having a fight. His friend thought it was funny to put Harvey's face—my son's face—up on the poster, as if he was going to be fighting him. He was 17. Why would you put Harvey's face up as if he was going to be having the fight? It caused uproar because I put it on Instagram. Then I had people saying, "Why are you trying to dog Dapper



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Laughs?" I said, "Well, it's not him, but why would he want to be friends with someone who is mocking my son, and you are doing a fight for charity?" I don't get it.

Why should I, as a mother, have to sit here and worry about what might be said to my kids? Why should I have to sit there, when things should be in place for everyone? Why should I have to sit here and worry? I have my own life to worry about rather than worrying that someone is going to be picking on my kids or picking on someone I know. Things have got to be in place.

Q46 **Nick Fletcher:** No; you should not have to.

Katie Price: None of us should.

Q47 **Nick Fletcher:** The Committee got in touch with the footballing bodies and raised the issue with them. They got little or no response from them. What would you like these footballing bodies to do? Would you like them to get involved? Obviously, they have a really high profile and surely they could do some good. Is that something that you would like to move forward with?

Katie Price: Yes. I would do anything it takes, and they need to do something about it. This is what I say to people. Frankie Boyle, for example—I am never going to let it drop. I did a documentary on how disgusting it was. Say if his wife or kids got paralysed from the neck down, would he then say the comments he said about my son? He would have to be the full-time carer. Let's see then if he mocks disability. No, he would not.

It is as if people need to have an impact or something. I don't know what goes through people's heads. Like I said, if there was social media sitting now in front of me, I would say, "Why on earth would you take off my daughter, who is 12 but in one month's time you know she is 13, and she has built up all her friends? You are more interested in taking her off TikTok and getting it all in the media that you have taken her off it, yet you are letting them mock my son on there. You don't care that it happens, and you let them do it."

It is the priorities. They need to step up. We all do it. I make money by doing stuff on social media but, instead of grabbing all the money from advertising, put that money in to helping, saving lives, mental health and everything.

Q48 **Nick Fletcher:** It does seem to be a little bit of Jekyll and Hyde with people. People, like you say, can be kind to your face, but as soon as they get behind a screen they write the things that they do. It is just a muddle.

Earlier you mentioned about the police. Have you made any further complaints to the police about any of this?



Katie Price: Do you know what? To be fair, the police officers I have always spoken to and dealt with get angry themselves, especially the officers who did arrest certain people that I complained about. It went in the papers anyway. They were so angry and so wanted to see these people get punished, but they couldn't because there is nothing in place. What do they arrest them for? "Oh, I've arrested you because you have made out you are having sex with her son."

Yet paedophiles get in trouble. For me, that is just as bad as being a paedophile. A grown man who had a four-year-old daughter mocked having sex with Harvey, but using Harvey when he goes, "Yeah babe, yeah babe." It was acceptable for him to go, "Do you like that, Harv?" and then Harvey going, "Yeah babe," as if he was having sex with him. It is disgusting. Why should he have got away with that? To me, that is like being a paedophile—having sex with my son. It's wrong, but he got away with it.

Q49 **Nick Fletcher:** Do you think there really is a willingness of the police to come down on this then? Do you think that the police are with you and they want to do it?

Katie Price: Yes, the police need to help. I am not blaming the police officers. They are human, like us, and a lot of them have kids. They are disgusted. They want to do something, but they can't because you can't get just a group of policemen. You need the whole force. There needs to be—

Amy Price: I think the problem is that there is no law in place. Going back to the sports bit, with the footballers and what is going on now with all this racial thing at the moment, hopefully the football organisations may take it more seriously and come up with stopping online trolling, as well as what goes on in the crowds when a football match is being watched. It is the racial abuse that they suffer, and Harvey has as well, from the football people.

As you said before, Nick, the football people—the teams and the organisations—haven't wanted to know. That has been a big problem all the way through it, I think.

Q50 **Nick Fletcher:** Have you tried to contact them yourself, Katie?

Chair: We have lost Katie. She will come back, I think, but we still have Amy.

Q51 **Nick Fletcher:** Amy, do you know if Katie has tried to contact them herself?

Amy Price: I think she has, but to be honest with you they have never been interested because one thing leads to another. It is like water off their back really. They haven't been interested until maybe now, hopefully.



Nick Fletcher: Thank you for answering my questions.

Q52 **Chair:** Do you think one of the big problems is that it is almost like people do not know where to start? They do not know where to start even trying to deal with it because it is so huge, so widespread and such a big problem. That may be part of the issue.

You are right that there are many aspects to this. Does the law fit? Are the media companies operating in a way that discourages this? Do we do enough as a society to expose it and make sure things can change?

Amy Price: If we go back to 2017 when we started this, nothing really has changed since then. So, three years on, nothing.

Chair: I will come to that. I have an update for you on where we are. I will bring in Tonia first, who has some questions to ask you, and hopefully we will get Katie back as well. She seems to have lost her signal.

Q53 **Tonia Antoniazzi:** Thank you, Chair. Hi, Amy. In 2019, the previous Petitions Committee published its report into online abuse and the experiences of disabled people. It called for tough action to tackle this.

Earlier this year the Government published their Online Harms White Paper. It did not really offer any specific protections for disabled people or specific measures in relation to disability hate crime.

Do you think that the Government should be taking specific action on the abuse that disabled people face?

Amy Price: Yes, I do, without a doubt. Disability covers a lot of things. It is not just someone who is disabled; it is mentally—it is everything. You imagine the scope of all that. There is just nothing in place that the Government have put in to protect these people.

Q54 **Tonia Antoniazzi:** Do you have any views on the Government's proposals to regulate the social media companies more strictly? From what we have listened to today, it has to happen and it can't stay this way. It has to change. What would you like to see happen to the social media companies? If they are failing to get a grip on the issue, what do you think they need to do or needs to happen to them?

Amy Price: Obviously, they have to take more responsibility for policing it. At the moment, they don't. That is one main thing.

As Kate said, they have to take more details of people that are going on social media, so you know who they are and so that you can get hold of these people. Also, it goes from the social media companies and then it goes to the police. The police have to have laws in place because their laws are out of date now really. Social media has gone with such a big bang now. Everyone is using it. Really, if you think about it, they have to make more laws to protect people with disabilities.



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It is really difficult. As I was saying earlier, people with disabilities can use the internet, but they don't know if they are being conned on it. They don't know if someone is genuine on it. It is just the same for us, like we are normal people.

Q55 Tonia Antoniazzi: I have been an MP since 2017. The amount of time that we spend on social media checking and seeing what people have said about us is quite time-consuming. Do you worry that you and your family, particularly Katie, are spending a lot of time monitoring what is going on, or do you have some extra help to do that?

Amy Price: We do it ourselves. We look ourselves. Kate, in particular, is always looking at what comes up about Harvey because she obviously wants to protect him and her other children. I don't look so much myself, but Kate always forwards it on to me. Then we say, "Right, what are we going to do about it this time?" There is so much of it. There really is, honestly; it is crazy.

Q56 Tonia Antoniazzi: Could you do with some extra support, to have that kind of help to monitor accounts for high-profile people?

Amy Price: You can monitor it, but what are you going to do about it? You can find it. It is not hard to find where Harvey is being trolled, but what do you do? You report it to the police, but what do they do? There is not much they can do because laws are not in place for it. There is nothing in place as such to protect these people. That is why we say there should be a register and people's names on it that have been found. If there is a deterrent and a consequence to their action, maybe that is the only real thing that will stop them.

Tonia Antoniazzi: Thank you very much, Amy.

Q57 Chair: Thanks, Amy. I know you have mentioned that what you and Katie have been campaigning for is to create an actual offence of online abuse, and to create a register of offenders as a way of tackling the online abuse. The petition that we are reviewing at the moment is the one started by Bobby Norris. He has called for a specific criminal offence—in this case he is asking for it in relation to homophobic hate crime, but I think it would equally apply to disability hate crime—and that online abusers then be banned from social media sites. Is that something that you would support as well?

Amy Price: Yes; we would support that, but I think we need to go a step further than that.

Q58 Chair: What do you think is an appropriate punishment for people who abuse online?

Amy Price: You can be banned from being online, but then you could start again in someone else's name. To me, you are taking away the fact that they can do it, but they could start again on it. I think you need



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something, as I said, like this register where there is a consequence for life on it. Once your name is on it, it would be for a period of maybe five or six years or something like that, and then they could come off. If they have that, say if they go to get a job, then someone could see that they have been abusing people.

Let us all go back to the beginning. It starts with the social media company trying to do something. Then it starts with policing it. Then it starts with trying to stop the online abuse and guidelines for that. The ultimate would be a register, I think. The police have to have some laws that there are consequences if they actually do get hold of them.

Q59 Chair: That is really clear; thank you. As part of this inquiry, we will be inviting the social media companies to come in and answer questions. We will put to them some of the issues that you have raised with us today and given us evidence on. I totally appreciate your sense of frustration. We have looked at this and you gave really compelling evidence, just as you have today. It is clear there is a big problem and it is getting worse and not better. Something needs to be done.

We did produce a report. We made very clear to the Government that this is not going to resolve itself. It needs intervention and we need to make online a safe place to be. We need to make online a place where people, because of their disability, sexuality or for any reason, cannot be abused online endlessly in a way that you would never either even attempt or get away with offline.

The Government have looked at it and they have produced a White Paper, which is basically a proposal document. People can then feed into a consultation on how to actually do something about it in practical terms—for example, regulation of social media companies and putting in a code of practice for them. If they are not going to monitor this and make the changes themselves, we need a regulator to step in and at least put in some boundaries, parameters and standards.

The next element is whether it becomes criminal, and whether we need a new legislative framework that is up to date and can deal with online crime as much as offline crime. Sometimes it is that we are not keeping up with online activity and able to police it in the same way.

Then there is the resource, which Tonia rightly alluded to. It takes a lot of time and resource to monitor the online world. That is another feature. This is something that the Government are looking at. It has, unfortunately, been stalled with the pandemic and dealing with the crisis that we have been facing as a country.

We are very pleased to be able to contribute again to this debate, raising it in profile, importance and urgency. As a country, we could lead the way on this and make the UK a pioneer in creating safe and positive online spaces. Because we are all more online now in this world—and more of us



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are online—we should be doing everything we can to create a more positive online environment.

This is just to reassure you that your evidence will go towards creating a report that we will feed in again. Hopefully, we will start to see some change going forward and a new positive framework for the online world. That is the intention.

Amy Price: I am going to say to you, how long will it take?

Q60 **Chair:** We are going to take evidence from the social media companies. Hopefully, we will do that as quickly as possible because we recognise the urgency of this issue. Then we have to collate all the evidence and put our recommendations to the Government. The Government will have to feed it into the process. They have already got under way on looking at a new framework.

I cannot really put a timeframe on it because it is dependent on the Government as much as anything else. As a Committee, we have prioritised this issue. We took some really powerful evidence from Bobby Norris as well. This is affecting so many people in so many different ways. It is affecting people of every age and some of the most vulnerable people in the worst way. It is something that we are very committed to working on with you, Bobby, all the people who have signed the petition and everybody who wants to see a safer and more positive online environment in which we all operate now. We would like to see that become more positive.

Thank you very much indeed for your evidence today. I am so sorry that we lost Katie. Hopefully, she can watch back what she has missed. Obviously, if she wanted to feed anything else in or if there is something she particularly wanted to share with us that she has not managed to, she could just record a message or send us a message and we can include it in our inquiry.

Obviously, we can catch up again, because I think the work that you are doing in this campaign is really impressive and powerful. We are keen to keep working with you. Thank you very much indeed.

Amy Price: Thank you very much, all of you.

Chair: Goodbye.