



Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
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Ronan Harris
Vice-President & Managing Director, UK & Ireland
Google
c/o 6 Pancras Square
London N1C 4AG

By email

19 May 2020

Dear Mr Harris,

Oral evidence: COVID-19 Infodemic

I received a letter last week from Alina Dimofte, UK Public Policy and Government Relations Manager, following her oral evidence to the Committee on behalf of Google on 30 April.

Further to Ms. Dimofte's evidence, the Committee still has outstanding questions regarding user reporting functionality, algorithms and recommendation systems and the placing of ads on websites peddling conspiracy theories, which have not been sufficiently answered in detail. We also remain concerned that YouTube has allowed creators to effectively monetise the spread of misinformation through Super Chat revenue (demonstrated by the London Real/David Icke case), which goes against other efforts to demonetise these videos.

In my letter to Google on 4 May, I expressed disappointment with the oral evidence given on 30 April. In my letter, I left open the option of recalling Google – represented this time by a senior executive with direct knowledge of, and accountability for, company policy. I regret to say that I now have no option but to do this.

Accordingly, we request oral evidence from you, as a senior executive with sufficient knowledge and authority to give an accurate account of recent events concerning Google's response to the infodemic. On 13 May, I asked a government minister whether social media companies have a problem with democratic scrutiny, which she could not deny to despite her relatively positive assessment of your efforts in tackling misinformation thus far. I hope therefore you take this opportunity to be accountable and transparent to your users in the UK and abroad.

We would like this session to take place in w/c 1 June. Committee staff will be in touch to discuss a suitable timeslot, but I would ask that you respond by Friday 22 May confirming your willingness to participate.

Yours sincerely,

Julian Knight MP
Chair, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee