

**Supplementary written evidence submitted by Rob Jones, Director of Threat Leadership, National Crime Agency (CHA0051)**

1. Thank you for inviting me to give evidence to your inquiry on Channel crossings, migration and asylum-seeking routes through the EU. During the evidence session on 3 September 2020 I agreed to provide a response to a question raised around how social media enables organised immigration crime.
2. Organised Immigration Crime groups (OICGs) regularly use social media channels to publicise people smuggling services, including advertising false or stolen documents.
3. The most prominent social media sites/applications featuring posts linked to organised immigration crime include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Telegram. Less frequently, posts are also seen on alternative platforms such as YouTube, TikTok and various blog-hosting services. The posts on all of these sites are observed in a range of languages.
4. Recent research to examine the use of alternative social media platforms has also identified the use of foreign-language sites and applications such as Weibo, WeChat, Baidu BBS, Zalo and VKontakte.
5. The NCA and partners are committed to breaking the criminal business model of people smugglers and as such we seek to identify social media pages with OIC content and refer them for closure.
6. As I mentioned at the evidence session, between January and May 2020, the NCA referred 1,218 social media pages for closure. Of these, as of 3 September, 578 had been closed, 485<sup>1</sup> remained open and decisions are awaited in respect of the remaining 155.
7. In response to the Chair's question I confirmed that Facebook and You Tube are used by OICGs. The attrition rate relating to takedowns I raised relates to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, not You Tube.
8. The main reasons provided by social media companies for pages not being removed include that the page does not contravene their policies or that the page or post does not meet the required threshold to constitute a breach of policy. On occasion, individual posts will be removed but the pages kept open.

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<sup>1</sup>Please note this reflects a snapshot in time. Final referrals were sent in May and responses continue to be received.

9. At the evidence session, I undertook to share some example social media posts with the Committee. In order for us to fully address the Committee's line of enquiry on social media platforms, I would like to extend an invitation to Committee Members to visit the Agency at their convenience to receive a briefing from my officials on this and Organised Immigration Crime more widely.

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