TikTok—suppplementary written evidence (FEO0117)

House of Lords Select Committee on Communications and Digital inquiry into Freedom of Expression Online

The below is additional information provided to the House of Lords following the 13 May evidence session.

(1) How do you ensure that the design of your platform encourages good digital citizenship and gives users equal opportunities to exercise their freedom of expression?

We work hard to strike the right balance between safety and freedom of expression, and to nurture good digital citizenship among our community. Policies and tools that we have developed to promote a positive app environment while retaining the right to freedom of expression include:

1. **Rethink Comments**: We recently launched a feature that will prompt users if they are trying to post a comment that might be unkind and ask them to reconsider that before they post.

2. **In-App Reporting**: We empower our users to report any content they see which they believe violates our community guidelines through our simple in-app reporting tools, which will send the reported content to moderation.

3. **Educational Content**: TikTok proactively promotes safety videos in users' For You feeds, which is where most users view content on TikTok, reinforcing our Community Guidelines and offering tutorials on how to use certain features. Our Youth Portal[1] also offers both in-app tools and educational content to help teens learn about digital safety. Topics include internet security, personal privacy and community best practices.

4. **Family Pairing**: We rolled out this feature last year[2] which allows parents and caregivers to pair their app with their teens and collaborate on some of the safety settings, meaning they can set limits on things like screen time and search functionality. Family Pairing enhances our suite of safety tools and complements our work to provide greater access to product features as users reach key milestones for digital literacy. It is part of our continued work toward providing parents stronger features to guide their teen's online experience while allowing time to educate about online safety and digital citizenship.

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[1]   https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-au/our-commitment-to-digital-literacy
[2]   https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/tiktok-introduces-family-pairing/

5. **Campaigns**: We push campaigns to drive good digital citizenship. This includes out recent #SwipeOutHate campaign[3] which sets out our firm position against any kind of hate speech, and particularly encourages our community to stand against hate in football - for example through using our safety tools and in-app effects.

In addition, our Community Guidelines provide clear guardrails for our users by defining a set of norms and a common code of conduct on the platform. We believe that enforcing these Community Guidelines cultivates good behaviour and etiquette on our platform, while ensuring that we take action on content in a transparent and equitable manner.

We work to foster media literacy more broadly on the platform to encourage our community to critically evaluate the content they come across. We take the responsibility to help educate our users seriously, which means making sure that everyone has access to good, accurate information whenever they need it.

To achieve this, it's important that our users are able to correctly identify what they are watching and to know if they are being given potentially inaccurate or harmful information.

As a result, we recently launched a new #FactCheckYourFeed[4] campaign which has seen us collaborate with some of our top creators, public figures, journalists and digital media literacy charity The Student View[5] to roll out a series of media literacy videos on the platform. Throughout the campaign, TikTok will be rolling out more videos focused on other important areas like financial literacy, diet and exercise and vaccine information. We'll also make sure that users who search for these topics get these videos presented to them, as well as notifying all users of the new content through in-app notifications. This will help equip our community with the skills they need to critically engage with content, navigate our platform safely and guard themselves against potential harms.

As part of #FactCheckYourFeed, we have worked with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to help tackle the spread of false information about the COVID-19 vaccine. Using the key messaging from DCMS's 'Check Before You Share' toolkit, well known doctors have taken to TikTok to provide users with simple tips on how to critically analyse sources, spot false information and help stop its spread, signposting to the most accurate source of information such as the NHS.

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[3] https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-eu/together-we-swipeouthate-in-football-and-protect-the-community-we-love-eu

[4] https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-gb/tiktok-launches-factcheckyourfeed-to-support-media-literacy

[5] https://www.thestudentview.org/

(2) How could the Government better promote good digital citizenship, both among children and adults?

We believe that the government, platforms and expert NGOs should work closely together to educate and inform users across a range of issues related to using the internet and social media. TikTok's Safety Centre brings together a range of media literacy tools, including resources on anti-bullying, Covid-19, suicide hotlines, educational videos and links to the websites of our safety partners.

Campaign like #FactCheckYourFeed can help drive awareness and cut through with users by bringing together expert charities, creators and public figures to encourage users to consider educational and safety messages as part of their engagement with our platform.

An example of this kind of collaborative work that could be instructive to government is a campaign we developed in partnership with three NGOs - the Holocaust Educational Trust, Antisemitism Policy Trust and Community Security Trust - to educate users about the Holocaust, antisemitism and Jewish history. On Holocaust Memorial Day[6] when any UK user opened TikTok they would have seen a video explaining the importance of remembering the Holocaust. Additionally, throughout the app we pointed users to an educational page which talks about what the Holocaust was, why it is important to remember it, what modern day antisemitism looks like and why we must stand against it. Starting that same week when any UK user searched for terms related to Holocaust denial the terms weren't just blocked as would be the normal practice. But we added a new feature which meant that the user was led through to educational resources on what the Holocaust is and the importance of remembering it.

Crucially the educational resources were developed by experts, survivors or people with a personal connection to the Holocaust. But also all resources were TikTok videos, maximising the likelihood that our users would watch and engage with the content. We recognised we are not experts on this area so were really pleased we were able to work directly with experts on everything from the mechanics of the campaign to fact-checking the materials we used for this campaign. Our campaign educational hub received 1.9m total views and our 'top view' advertising video on the day of remembrance was seen by 25.78 million people. That is a huge figure for this kind of campaign - nearly 26 million people engaged with this content.

We would encourage government to work in a similar way, engaging with platforms, industry experts, NGOs and charities to identify existing gaps in understanding and spread credible, relevant and importantly well researched messaging that encourages better digital citizenship.

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[6]   https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-gb/supporting-our-community-to-learn-more-about-the-holocaust

We are proud of the way we have worked with the government over covid-19 to communicate authoritative health information and we've already been discussing our approach to the digital citizenship with Ofcom and DCMS and will look at sharing the lessons we learn.

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