

Written evidence from member of the public (COV0256)

I have tried to submit this through the Committee portal, but do not know how to, which illustrates my point in a way. [How many other people in this country are similarly disenfranchised? My father's finger's, incidentally, are too big to tackle an electronic keyboard. He is a person and part of the electorate.]The covid outbreak in this country has proven the usefulness of a degree of some online interconnection in this country (to whom?) but I feel that the time has come to assert the right for people also to live a life offline [and not be penalised unduly for it].I live in an area 3 miles from a town, so not in the wilderness, where there is no mobile phone reception. The same as a lot of people on the IW in the failed covid tracing app. That means that I have never learnt how to use a smartphone to the level to which such a skill is now required to interact with ordinary societal functions. I have become dependent on people where I was independent before.

I cannot move my money around, check how much I have, make payments etc etc, because all banks now seem to require a mobile phone function to text security codes to. This means also that functions like essential insurance may become inaccessible.

I cannot make medical and other appointments for the same reason. They cannot text me [and treat me like a foot-dragger when I tell them this.]

All social appointments have become so fluid that an arrangement made is often cancelled. [If this was routine in institutional procedures such as courts, the country would grind to a halt. So why is it alright as a way of proceeding for private people?]

Yet even now, on this communication, my information is being harvested by the companies that I have already paid. I have paid for the real-life equipment and I have paid for the rental of the connection. To say nothing of the earwax adverts and the unwanted videos that steal my time.

At age 57, I am frankly terrified of my old age, since not only will I be unable to use the technology, but I will be treated badly by the younger people who think I should be able to, as if it were a hygiene issue, or as if I were a political refusenik.

The latest incident occurred when I tried to get into the country (my country) last weekend and was put at risk of exposure to covid, having spent money, time and effort avoiding this by renting a ferry cabin, taking my own food, staying in my car or in lockdown, wearing a mask, carrying gloves and so on. I was supposed to have filled in a government form on the ferry using my smartphone and/or PC which of course I will have taken on holiday. Because I was unable to, I was detained at Plymouth and an unwiped tablet, which had gone from unconnected passenger to passenger [the naughty ones who didn't have smartphones] was thrust through my car window by an ungloved customs person to fill in the form.

I was not at all clear on whose authority this was being done - PHE or UK Customs - and neither did they. They just threatened me with a £100 fine if I didn't comply. None of these requirements were given on my tickets or anything before I left the country. Does the UK Gov website assume that everybody leaving the country is not coming back? The Customs would not accept my contact information on a piece of paper (danger of contamination?) It all goes one way, doesn't it? I have to have a computer, but they do not have to accept what I am in a position to give. When did this ceding of rights happen? Who allowed it?

At Plymouth, if they were collecting for PHE and for covid prevention, why did they need my passport number since I was returning home. Is the doctor, if I have covid, going to contact the passport office so that they can contact me?

No. It is going to the American company (of course) because the address section has to fit in with what a processor in Illinois can handle - zip codes etc. These companies can still not even give us the respect to put in a template which reflects the UK mode of addressing post. House number or name, street, town, county, postcode. Of course not, our essential national postal system with the queen's head on it doesn't even belong to us. We have to navigate the 'state' we live in on these forms, meaning Tennessee, California etc. Demeaning and ridiculous. Controlling the movement of things from America or wherever does not alter the fact that these very same things have sometimes only to get from, for example, Taunton to Crediton. Such a situation is wrong wrong wrong. As we saw from the failure of access to PPE. I wanted to get from Plymouth to my home near Crediton, but had to submit my passport number to an American company to do so. This is too much online existence.

But we should be much more worried than we are because of the effect that this enforced online existence has for our young people.

They cannot understand real life through online life. They cannot assess risk. They cannot make judgements, for example about road safety, money, how their confidential/personal information will be used in the near or far future. For young people, the future is a few months away, not 5 or 10 years or longer.

They find it hard to judge the normality or otherwise of their own emotions, and become dependent on adults again for guidance out of their troubles. They confuse online contact with friends with face-to-face. When reality hits them, they are surprised and traumatised and justifiably so. They think they have a social life and every time they try to realise it they find that they do not, because the real life facts of getting from A to B and back again, together, are not smooth as they are portrayed online. They do not have money. They do not have housing, so they can grow from child to adult, but they model themselves, mistakenly, on people who do, who probably acquired these things in easier times. Actually very little works, but we live in the fiction that it does.

The covid outbreak has made this all too plain. Escape from cities and lockdown? All go to Bournemouth, where there are no public loos and the beach is trashed. No public services to provide these things because we have all been too busy looking at our screens. The country is like a dustbin because our car travel seems to allow us to chuck things out of the windows as we go. Where is the American online company who is going to pick it up? They are just producing more packaging to feed the turtles and whales. On a worldwide scale, in little steps, we have ecological disaster. Which we have.

Finally, what is going to happen to cash? Have we already lost it? How would I have had to pay my fine at Plymouth? What would have happened if I had offered cash? Is this why we are all in a chaos of debt? Organisations invent charges and overcharge online to grab our money so that we as individuals have to claw it back. Energy companies, for example, use our stolen cash to speculate, and many people like to live in this gambling culture. They might get lucky (my *rse). I am not trying to stop them, but I do not want random demands and a gambling sensibility imposed on me. It violates my autonomy, steals my time, attention

and wellbeing, takes away control over what I have, what I work for and what I can plan for in this uncertain world.

So please, if you can, consider in the longer term the idea of the RIGHT TO AN ANALOGUE EXISTENCE. Until people can produce babies online (when we can't even control infectious diseases) the online world has no right to take over my existence. I should always have a real alternative to it. Our covid response would have been better, too. Had we had real PPE in real places.

I logged on to the covid-19 in-home antibody testing research study website just now because I have been approached to take part in this.

Ipsos Mori are involved in gathering information here, which includes NHS number, name, address, age, gender etc. Also you sign on to consent to cookies.

Why is this required for an NHS study?

I looked up Sam who's in charge of Ipsos Mori, and he says in an interview, that computing power enables us to do much better presentations than before. He also says that big data is like teenage sex - much anticipation, but we don't quite know how to handle it. This is really not good enough.

Sleazy comments, to cover a much less humorous reality, by the company collecting my personal info for medical research, just won't cut it.

The offer is : you help the NHS and your fellow man, but you must also consent to cookies, which unfortunately a massive company like Ipsos Mori can't tell where it's going - oops, I've just sold it to Trump's/Putin's team - and you give up your other info too. No deal.

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