

Independent Parliamentary Inquiry into Online Child Protection



Findings and Recommendations

April 2012

Contents

| | <i>Page</i> |
|---|-------------|
| Report | |
| Background to the Inquiry | 3 |
| Summary of Findings | 5 |
| Recommendations | 8 |
| Structure of the Inquiry | 9 |
| Topics for the Inquiry: | |
| 1. Are children seeing internet porn and does it matter? | 12 |
| 2. What are British Internet Service Providers doing to protect children online? | 15 |
| 3. What additional tools do parents need to protect children online? | 18 |
| 4. What are the pros and cons of network filtering? | 20 |
| 5. Should the Government introduce regulation to provide further protection for children? | 24 |
| Formal Evidence Sessions | |
| Oral Evidence Sessions One and Two | 26 |
| Oral Evidence Sessions Three and Four | 57 |

Background to the Inquiry

The global economic benefits delivered by the internet are incalculable. The scope, connectivity and accessibility of this global database and communications highway have revolutionised business models and created undreamt-of ways for people to communicate, work and play. Underpinning the system are core principles - almost religious tenets - of decentralisation and freedom which mean that every piece of information and content is available and accessible somewhere. It would be anathema to see these principles compromised. But as the internet evolves from an intermittently used, stand-alone system into an always-on, always-accessible backdrop to our lives, then the downsides of this accessibility become more apparent.

Since the early days of the World Wide Web, pornography has been one of the most widely available forms of internet content. Freedom from prying eyes, human imagination and zero barriers to entry have led to an explosion of pornographic creativity with every possible sexual act represented online including many that are deeply degrading, disturbing and violent. It is said that the whole history of human sexual perversion is only a few clicks away. Unfortunately, our children, with their natural curiosity and superior technological skills, are finding and viewing these images.

With no central point of management or control of the internet at global, regional or national level, and millions of new web sites emerging every year, many in the internet industry suggest that it is easier to tackle the problem of children seeing undesirable content by using filters installed on individual computers – so called device-level filters – rather than blocking content at a network level. There have been exceptions to this. Our British internet industry has led the world in tackling child abuse imagery by collectively creating the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) in 1996 and then working together later with the IWF to block sites known to contain illegal abuse images. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) also filter content at a whole network level depending on the law or practice in individual countries and, in some cases, in response to commercial considerations.

Many feel that device-level filters are no longer offering sufficient protection for children online. Only a minority of parents use these filters and this number is falling. An explosion in the number of internet-enabled devices makes the process of individual device protection even more arduous. Children spend increasing amounts of time online, are often more "tech savvy" and knowledgeable than their parents and know how to circumvent or avoid device filters. The result is that children are stumbling across or seeking out pornographic material and that this ready exposure to porn, especially the violent degrading material so easily available via an unfiltered internet connection, is having disturbing consequences. The current situation is of great concern to parents and those working with children and young people and things will only deteriorate as technological convergence means that freely available pornography from the internet will

be nestling alongside regulated and rated content offerings from broadcasters on the family internet-enabled television.

In other media industries, consumers, governments and content generation and distribution companies work together to regulate content delivery and to ensure that the younger members of society are shielded from inappropriate material. Very few would argue that the watershed guidelines for TV viewing, the application of film ratings, sensible advertising standards, or top-shelf placement agreements for pornographic magazines represent inappropriate forms of censorship but in the internet world, *any* attempt to regulate content before the point of delivery can be attacked as censorship unless (but not always) the content is deemed illegal.

It would be difficult and wrong to propose mandatory government censorship of internet pornography but clearly a new approach is required. A network-level “Opt-In” system, maintained by ISPs, that delivered a clean internet feed to customers as standard but allowed them to choose to receive adult content, would preserve consumer choice but provide an additional content barrier that protected children from accessing age-inappropriate material. This model would emulate the system already used by most major UK mobile phone companies, where access to adult content is blocked until an age verification check is conducted by the network operator, and could use the filtering technology already operating in all schools and on some public Wi-Fi hubs.

The cross-party Parliamentary Inquiry, supported by more than sixty members of both Houses, was convened to examine the current state of online child protection and review the arguments for and against network-level filtering. At the same time the Government asked Reg Bailey of the Mothers’ Union to carry out research that resulted in his comprehensive report entitled *“Letting Children be Children – Report of an Independent Review of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood* and our teams were able to work productively together.

Our full report follows.

Summary of Findings

1. Are children seeing internet porn and does it matter?

The Inquiry Panel concluded that many children are easily accessing online pornography and that this exposure is having a negative impact on children's attitudes to sex, relationships and body image.

This is of great concern to parents and professionals who worry about older children deliberately accessing hard-core and violent pornography as well as younger children accidentally finding inappropriate content online.

Many parents report feeling left behind by the evolution of technology and that they lack the knowledge and skills to educate their children about internet safety. Parents are also concerned about many other forms of disturbing internet content including cyber bullying, extreme violence, self-harm, suicide and pro-anorexia websites.

2. What are British Internet Service Providers doing to protect children online?

Internet Service Providers (ISPs) act as a gateway between consumers and the internet and generate substantial revenues from providing this service and they should share the responsibility of protecting under-age consumers from accessing inappropriate content.

ISPs currently offer their customers device-level filtering tools and internet safety education but the use of existing content filters, which by and large customers have to choose to install, update and maintain on each internet-enabled device in the home, has dropped 10 percentage points in the last three years and we are now at a point where almost six out of ten children can access the internet without filters in their homes.

The four largest British ISPs have recently developed a new Code of Conduct and agreed to implement new Active Choice controls where the consumer must actively choose whether to install device-level filters as part of an account sign up process (or in the case of TalkTalk, whether to activate their home network level filter). This will be marketed to all new subscribers by October 2012. While this is a step in the right direction, given that nine out of ten children already live in a household with internet access, the ISPs have not made detailed plans to roll this product out to all customers and with the exception of TalkTalk, the product will not protect all devices in the home. Active Choice will do little to address the underlying problem of inadequate filtering unless a more energetic approach is taken with implementation plans.

3. What additional tools do parents need to protect children online?

While parents *should* be responsible for monitoring their children's internet safety, in practice this is not happening. Parents find device filters difficult to install and maintain, lack internet safety education and up-to-date information.

Many opportunities exist to improve parental knowledge and education but the current system is fragmented and ineffective and ISPs, search engines, social networking sites and popular content sites need to do more to signpost and support the distribution of internet safety material as well as initiatives such as ParentPort which gives parents a one-stop shop to report inappropriate material in any format or ask for advice and information.

There are also multiple opportunities along the value chain from device manufacturer to ISP, to educate consumers and signpost existing safety settings, but these are being largely ignored by government and industry alike.

4. What are the pros and cons of network filtering?

Single account network filters, such as the one provided by TalkTalk with their HomeSafe product, that protect all devices sharing an internet connection, improve content filtering considerably.

The Inquiry found strong support for an Opt-In filter for adult material on the internet, which would offer the best protection for children online. This would be analogous to the service offered by almost all large British mobile phone companies (some of whom also supply fixed line internet broadband services) where mobile internet access is subject to a default adult content bar which can only be lifted by proving that the end user is over 18. An Opt-In system with a default setting that bars adult content is also standard in many commercial settings and in schools and the technology behind the content filters is well advanced.

Several key design and implementation issues would need to be addressed, including a workable age-verification interface and the need to design a granular permissioning system so that households can maintain different levels of access for different family members.

There is currently no evidence that an Opt-In model would add substantial cost or slow down internet access speeds and the main objections to the proposal appear to be ideological. We find it perverse that companies who apply an adult content block for their customers accessing the internet via a mobile device would argue against introducing a similar system for their fixed broadband customers.

No filtering system will ever deliver total protection and parents will still need to remain engaged and active in helping their families stay safe online.

5. Should the Government introduce regulation to provide further protection for children?

The Panel believes that ISPs working together will deliver a more effective Opt-In system on a self-regulated basis and that government regulation of the internet should always be done with the lightest touch. However, given the strength of the ideological resistance to introducing this change, we believe that the Government should seek backstop legal provisions to intervene should industry progress prove inadequate.

Finally, the regulatory framework for internet-distributed content is confused and overlapping, and there is a lack of joined-up accountability for internet content between monitoring and regulatory bodies such as the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), Ofcom, the Association for Television on Demand (ATVOD), the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) and the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). With technology convergence and changes in content consumption, we are moving towards a situation of inadequate regulation.

Recommendations

- 1. The Government should urgently review the implementation plans for “Active Choice” and press for an accelerated implementation timetable, more clarity on installation targets for all customers, and funding commitments from ISPs.**
- 2. ISPs should provide better support for internet safety education and initiatives such as ParentPort and improve signposting for these services from their own web domains.**
- 3. Government and industry representatives should draw up guidelines for improving the communication of existing internet safety settings, improving training for retailers, developing a family friendly kite-marking scheme for manufacturers and retailers and improving signposting to pre-installed security settings during device configuration.**
- 4. ISPs should be tasked with rolling out single account network filters for domestic broadband customers that can provide one click filtering for all devices connected to a home internet connection within 12 months.**
- 5. The Government should launch a formal consultation on the introduction of an Opt-In content filtering system for all internet accounts in the UK. The most effective way to reduce overall development cost and create the most flexible solution would be for ISPs to work together to develop a self-regulated solution.**
- 6. Public Wi-Fi provision should also be filtered in this way otherwise home-based controls will be easily circumvented.**
- 7. The Government should also seek backstop legal powers to intervene should the ISPs fail to implement an appropriate solution.**
- 8. Finally, the Government should consider the merits of a new regulatory structure for online content, with one regulator given a lead role in the oversight and monitoring of internet content and in improving the dissemination of existing internet safety education materials and resources such as ParentPort.**

Structure of the Inquiry

Rather than create a new All Party Parliamentary Group, which can often outlast its original campaigning purpose, the team decided to set up a one-off Inquiry to review the issue of online child protection.

Terms of Reference for the Inquiry:

1. To understand better the extent to which children access online pornography and the potential harm that this may cause;
2. To determine what British Internet Service Providers have done to date to protect children online and the extent and possible impact of their future plans in this area;
3. To determine what additional tools parents require to protect children from inappropriate content;
4. To establish the arguments for and against network-level filtering of adult content;
5. To recommend possible forms of regulation that may be needed to provide further protection for children.

The Panel

More than sixty MPs and Peers supported the work of the Inquiry but a core team made up the Inquiry Panel including:

- Claire Perry, Conservative (Chair)
- Peter Aldous, Conservative
- Harriett Baldwin, Conservative
- Julian Brazier, Conservative
- Annette Brooke, Liberal Democrat
- Fiona Bruce, Conservative
- David Burrowes, Conservative
- Mark Garnier, Conservative
- Helen Goodman, Labour
- Baroness Howe, Cross Bencher
- Andrea Leadsom, Conservative
- Denis MacShane, Labour
- Fiona Mactaggart, Labour
- Mark Pawsey, Conservative
- David Rutley, Conservative
- Andrew Selous, Conservative
- Jo Swinson, Liberal Democrat

Witnesses

Four formal oral evidence sessions were held. Those giving oral evidence were:

Oral Evidence Session 1

- Deidre Sanders, “Agony Aunt”, The Sun Newspaper
- The Rt. Hon Jacqui Smith, former Home Secretary
- Jerry Barnett, Managing Director, Strictly Broadband – the UK’s largest on-demand video porn website
- Justine Roberts, Founder of Mumsnet
- Julie Bentley, Chief Executive Officer, Family Planning Association
- Will Gardner, Chief Executive Officer, Childnet International

Oral Evidence Session 2

- Professor Sonia Livingstone, Professor of Social Psychology, London School of Economics
- Donald Findlater, Director of Research and Development, Lucy Faithfull Foundation
- Fleur Dorrell, Head of Faith & Policy, Mothers’ Union
- Lucie Russell, Director of Campaigns Policy, YoungMinds
- Tink Palmer, Chief Executive Officer, Marie Collins Foundation

Oral Evidence Session 3

- John Carr, Secretary, UK Children’s Charities’ Coalition on Internet Safety (UKCCIS)
- Professor Andy Phippen, Advisory Council Member, Open Rights Group (ORG)
- David Austin, Assistant Director, British Board of Film Classification (BBFC)
- Martin Large, Chief Executive Officer, tibboh – an Internet Service Provider
- Christopher Woolard, Group Director of Content, International and Regulatory Development, Ofcom

Oral Evidence Session 4

- Dido Harding, Chief Executive Officer, TalkTalk
- Kip Meek, Senior Public Policy Advisor, Everything Everywhere
- Jonny Shipp, Head of Content and Standards Policy, Telefónica, O2
- Nicholas Landsman, Secretary General, Internet Services Providers’ Association (ISPA UK)
- Matt Lambert, Director of Corporate Affairs, Microsoft

Written Evidence was received from:

- Ofcom
- ICM Registry
- The Girls’ Schools Association
- Facebook
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)
- British Board of Film Classification (BBFC)
- The Internet Society

- Kirklees Council
- Westminster Media Forum
- The Internet Services Providers' Association
- The National Council of Women of Great Britain
- Safermedia
- Mediawatch UK
- Beatbullying
- The Family and Parenting Institute
- The Authority for Television on Demand (ATVOD)
- Telefónica
- TalkTalk
- Professor Andy Phippen
- Quik Internet
- The Sun newspaper
- E-Safe systems
- ATVOD
- MetaCert
- O2
- International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children

Private briefing meetings were also held with:

- British Telecom
- Symantec
- Sky
- TalkTalk
- Apple
- Barnados
- UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS)
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)
- MetaCert
- The South West Grid for Learning

1. Are children seeing internet porn and does it matter?

British families live in a connected world. Over three-quarters of British households now have access to the internet,¹ and nine out of ten children aged 5 to 15 have internet access at home.² The average age when a child first uses the internet in the UK is 8 years old,³ and the majority of children access the internet alone making it difficult for parents to monitor their activity.

As children grow up, both internet usage and solitary access increase.

| | Average weekly internet visits | | Internet Access in own room % | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|------|-------------------------------|------|
| | 2005 | 2010 | 2004 | 2010 |
| All children | 3.9 | 5.5 | 20 | 53 |
| Aged 7-10 | 2.8 | 4.4 | 9 | 41 |
| Aged 11-16 | 4.4 | 6.1 | 30 | 61 |

Source: *CHILDWISE Monitor Report 2010/11*

We know that children use the internet for schoolwork or homework, playing games, watching TV or social networking. But they are also accessing pornography, either deliberately or accidentally. A 2008 YouGov survey found that 27 per cent of boys were accessing pornography every week, with 5 per cent viewing it every day.⁴ Another study showed that a quarter of young people had received unsolicited pornographic junk mail or instant messages while almost one in eight had visited pornographic websites showing violent images.⁵

A more recent study reviewing internet usage among children across Europe found lower reported figures with 11 per cent of British children of all ages saying they have seen “sexual content” on websites (defined as people naked or people having sex) but one quarter of teenage boys in this study said that they view sexual images online.⁶ Smaller-scale and more anecdotal studies suggest four out of five children aged 14-16 regularly access online porn at home.⁷

¹ ONS Report on Internet Access, August 2011

² Ofcom children’s and parents’ media use and attitudes report 2011

³ Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Gorzig, A., and Olafsson, K. (2011) EU Kids Online, Risks and Safety on the Internet: The Perspective of European Children 2011

⁴ Sex Education Survey, YouGov 2008

⁵ Livingstone and Bober *et al.* 2005 Internet Literacy among children and young people

⁶ Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Gorzig, A., and Olafsson, K. (2011) EU Kids Online, Risks and Safety on the Internet: The Perspective of European Children 2011

⁷ Psychologies Magazine, July 2010

The Panel heard that parents and those working with children and young adults were extremely concerned that children were accessing adult material and also about the extreme nature of many of the images accessed. A YouGov survey in February 2011 found that 83 per cent of people felt that easy access to pornography on the internet was damaging to children⁸ while Mumsnet reported that a survey of their site users found that 84 per cent were concerned that easy access to internet porn, especially hard-core material, was harmful. Mumsnet also reported concerns around two specific areas: young children stumbling across material in response to innocent search terms, and older children, especially teenage boys, seeking out more hard-core or violent material. Repeatedly, witnesses raised concerns over the type of pornography available, described as “not porn as we know it”, and also told the Panel of the ease with which users can click through a hierarchy of imagery to reach violent, degrading and coercive material.

The Panel also heard from those involved in making and distributing porn that the amount of free explicit content has “exploded” in recent years. Historically, commercial pornography sites would site more explicit material behind a pay wall and adult content warnings but the growth in user-generated material on the internet has dramatically altered the economics of the industry. As a result, more hard-core imagery is now available in the “free shop front” of commercial porn sites and only 3 per cent of pornographic websites require proof of age before granting access to explicit material while two-thirds of these sites do not include any adult content warnings.⁹

Witnesses acknowledged the ethical difficulties in assessing the impact of exposure to pornography on children, but repeatedly told the Panel of the changes that they are witnessing in terms of body image, sexual behaviour and relationship difficulties. Overuse of pornographic material has been shown to desensitise children and young people to violent or sexually aggressive acts, diminish sympathy for victims of sexual assault and reduce children’s own inhibitions, making them more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Moreover, a vicious circle of behaviour can develop where exposure to porn leads to early sexual involvement and an increased consumption of sexual media.¹⁰

We heard many disturbing examples of internet pornography forming part of the toolkit used to abuse children; young adolescents being pressured into risky sexual behaviour; girls and boys being referred to counselling for porn addiction, and the overall concern that children and young people have neither the experience or maturity to contextualise this imagery. Witnesses described this situation as a “social experiment with unknown long-term consequences”.

A striking theme throughout the Inquiry was the sense of powerlessness reported by parents who feel that they are being left behind by the evolution of technology and that they lack the knowledge and skills to have conversations with their children around this topic. The Panel also heard from those involved in educating parents about internet safety that many parents were “oblivious” to the type of material available on the internet and the

⁸ YouGov Survey on 2nd-3rd February, 2011

⁹ The Witherspoon Institute report, *The Social Costs of Pornography*, 2010

¹⁰ NSPCC written submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry

ease with which children can access it and were often shocked when they realised the content that children are accessing.

We also heard that parents are not only concerned about access to internet pornography but also other forms of harmful content including cyber bullying, extreme violence, self-harm, suicide and pro-anorexia websites, while the issue of “sexting” or peer-to-peer sharing of intimate images is also of great concern.

The Inquiry Panel concluded that many children are easily accessing online pornography and that this exposure is having a negative impact on children’s attitudes to sex, relationships and body image.

This is of great concern to parents and professionals who worry about older children deliberately accessing hard-core and violent pornography as well as younger children accidentally finding inappropriate content online.

Many parents report feeling left behind by the evolution of technology and that they lack the knowledge and skills to educate their children about internet safety. Parents are also concerned about many other forms of disturbing internet content including cyber bullying, extreme violence, self-harm, suicide and pro-anorexia websites.

2. What are British ISPs doing to protect children online?

There are more than 450 fixed Internet Service Providers (ISPs) operating in the UK market but six companies: BT; Virgin Media; TalkTalk; Sky; Everything Everywhere and O2, control more than 90 per cent of the access market. Total industry revenue from providing fixed broadband and narrowband services exceeds £3 billion per annum.¹¹

The role of the ISP historically was described to the Panel as a “transmission only” or a “dumb pipe” service where their responsibility was to provide an access service to unlimited web content and the consumer was responsible for blocking or restricting access to any content they deemed inappropriate. Reference was made frequently to the EU Communications Directive, the free speech philosophy underpinning the internet and the technical difficulty of filtering the rapidly growing global universe of websites.

However, ISPs do already filter content at a network level depending on the law or practice in individual countries and, in some cases, in response to commercial considerations especially over copyright infringements. Also British ISPs acted collectively in 1996 to restrict consumer access to child abuse imagery by creating the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) to monitor sites displaying abuse and more recently working with the IWF and each other to block identified sites. Ninety-five per cent of domestic broadband services now use this filtering technology.

ISPs report taking the problem of internet safety very seriously and all major companies distribute free safety software to customers who request it, which installs content filters on each individual device that is connected to the internet. ISPs also try to educate consumers on internet safety with regular printed updates sent out with customer bills. However, ultimately it is up to consumers to decide to install filters and to find, download and update the software.

The use of device-level filters is falling in the UK. The proportion of parents who report installing internet controls or filtering software in households where there are children aged 5-15, has fallen 10 percentage points in the last three years to 39 per cent in 2011, meaning that up to six out of ten children can theoretically access the internet with no restrictions in their home. The use of parental controls is lowest in households with older children - only 33 per cent of parents with children aged 12-15 report using content filters or internet controls.¹²

Parents give many reasons for not installing filters, including trusting their children to be sensible and supervising their internet sessions. One in ten parents say that they don't know how to install filters or were unaware that this was possible.¹³

¹¹ Ofcom Communications Market Report UK 2011

¹² Ofcom children's and parents' media use and attitudes report 2011

¹³ Ibid

The Panel heard of other frustrations among those who tried to install filters, including; the time it takes to download the software, the ongoing difficulties of checking settings and downloading updates and the fact that in many households older children set up and maintain internet connections and are less likely to choose to install filters. Witnesses also raised the possibility that children living in more disadvantaged homes or in certain communities, especially those where English is a second language, would be less likely to have parents who install filters or monitor internet use and that perhaps it is the children who most need protection, who are least likely to receive it.

Installing content filters on each device has become even more of a challenge as web-enabled devices proliferate in the home. In 2011, consumers used a variety of devices to access the internet in the home, including the home PC or individual laptops, mobile phones, games consoles, portable media players and e-readers¹⁴. The Panel heard that one home had been found to contain 17 web-enabled devices. Each of these would require separate downloads of content filters under the current system.

In initial meetings with ISPs, most reported that changing parental controls, for example to cover all internet-enabled devices in the home with a single content filter, would be technologically difficult, costly and undesirable. However, in May 2011, TalkTalk launched a home network level filter called HomeSafe that protects any device in the home using the same internet connection.

The Bailey Review on *The Sexualisation and Commercialisation of Childhood* called on ISPs to allow every customer to make a decision at the point of purchase as to whether they want adult content on their home internet, laptops or smart phones, rather than receiving it automatically. In response, BT, TalkTalk, Virgin Media and Sky, who collectively have 87 per cent of the fixed broadband market¹⁵ announced a new voluntary Code of Practice and a new product called Active Choice. This will be rolled out for new customers in October 2012 and customers will be “actively” asked to choose whether to apply the filtering technology and controls that already exist but which are currently available only to customers who choose them. All customers will also receive a reminder with links to help and advice on controls at least annually through a wide range of accepted customer communication channels.

The Inquiry Panel has several major concerns about the scope and implementation of Active Choice:

- Implementation plans released to date suggest that only TalkTalk will offer the controls at a home network level meaning that customers with other ISPs will still have to download or set controls for multiple devices;
- With more than three-quarters of British households already connected to the internet and nine out of ten children already living in a “connected” household, implementing this product only with new clients will deliver little protection. Even with reported annual churn rates between ISPs of 10-15 per cent the Panel considers this implementation schedule to be lacklustre;

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ofcom Communications Market Report UK 2011

- The Panel was unable to establish when the ISPs expect to have rolled out Active Choice to their entire client base or what percentage of accounts were eventually expected to apply the controls;
- No financial commitments have been made that would support additional communications or the advertising of Active Choice to the ISPs' existing customer base.

The Inquiry concluded that ISPs, who act as the interface between consumers and the internet and generate substantial revenues from providing this service, do have a responsibility to ensure under-age consumers are protected from accessing inappropriate content.

ISPs already offer their customers device-level content filters and internet safety education but take up of device-level filters is limited and declining and as internet-enabled devices proliferate, this technology will become obsolete.

While Active Choice is a step in the right direction, the implementation plans are lacklustre at best. Not all ISPs are planning to provide a filter that will protect all internet-enabled devices connected to a single account and there seems to be little commitment to rolling the product out to the entire customer base. Unless a more energetic approach is taken, Active Choice will do little to address the underlying problem of inadequate filtering.

We therefore call upon the Government to urgently review the Active Choice implementation plan, to ask for further details on installation targets and funding commitments and to establish a regular timetable for reporting progress.

3. What additional tools do parents need to protect children online?

The Inquiry agreed with witnesses who said parents should be responsible for their children's safety, including in the online world, and that parents should also take the lead in talking to children about the dangers of inappropriate material on the internet.

But the current reliance on device-level content filters as the primary protection device for families, as well as a lack of information and educational tools, is making it difficult for parents to carry out these responsibilities. As has been reported elsewhere, the use of device-level filters has fallen to the point where almost six out of ten children can theoretically access the internet with no restrictions and fewer than half of parents enable other protection devices such as safe search settings for search engines, YouTube or broadcaster websites.¹⁶

However, even while they are not using filters or safe search modes, more than eight out of ten people said they are concerned that easy access to internet pornography is damaging to children.¹⁷ This apparent inconsistency can be partially explained when parental attitudes are probed more deeply. The majority of parents who do not use controls say it is because they trust their child to be sensible and responsible, or because they are supervising family internet use. However, less than half of parents report monitoring their children online¹⁸ and almost half of parents also say that their child knows more about the internet than they do, making it difficult for parents to assume the role of educators in this area.¹⁹

Parents also rely on others to educate their children about internet safety with more than three-quarters saying that their child has been taught how to use the internet safely at school.²⁰ Internet Service Providers were not seen as a major source of information on internet safety with less than one quarter of parents reporting that they received their safety advice from this source.²¹

Some witnesses claimed that parents are living in a dangerous bubble of complacency. Children are indeed taught internet safety in school, but it tends to focus on the issues of "stranger danger" and distribution of personal information via social networking sites rather than avoiding websites that many naturally curious children would wish to visit. Witnesses involved in teaching parents about internet safety told the Panel that in their experience, only 10 per cent of parents attend internet safety classes offered in their children's schools and that parents who did attend were shocked by what they heard.

¹⁶ Ofcom children's and parents' media use and attitudes report 2011

¹⁷ YouGov Survey on 2nd-3rd February, 2011

¹⁸ Ofcom children's and parents' media use and attitudes report 2011

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Gorzig, A., and Olafsson, K. (2011) EU Kids Online, Risks and Safety on the Internet: The Perspective of European Children 2011

Parents also say they lack the educational tools to discuss internet safety with their families. The Panel was told that the information currently available to parents on internet safety and controls is not consistent across industry, parent groups, children's charities, law enforcement and government. We also heard that parents were often too short of time or too embarrassed to discuss internet pornography with their children and did not know what to do if they found inappropriate content. New developments such as the ParentPort website where parents can identify inappropriate content in any media and the new UKCCIS guide on child internet safety are welcome initiatives but the advice offered is not comprehensive and the service is currently undersold.

The Inquiry also heard that there are many other opportunities to educate and assist consumers all along the value chain from device manufacturer to website moderator but that these are not being exploited sufficiently. For example:

- Devices are not sold with safety settings switched on as a default;
- Retailers do not ask if the computers or internet-enabled devices they are selling are to be used by children or provide information on security settings;
- Device manufacturers such as Apple include safety settings as part of their basic software installation but at no point during the device configuration process are these settings signposted or highlighted;
- ISPs rely on traditional postal services to distribute booklets about internet family safety but do not generally email customers or interpose any sort of login or reminder screen to highlight the use of safety settings once an account is activated.

The Panel concluded that while parents should be responsible for monitoring their children's internet safety, in practice this is not happening as parents lack easy to use content filters, safety education and up-to-date information.

Many opportunities exist to improve parental knowledge and education but the current system is fragmented and ineffective. ISPs could work together far more productively to support and rollout UKCCIS material as standard advice for customers.

ISPs, search engines, social networking sites and popular content sites could also do more to signpost and support the distribution of internet safety material and initiatives such as ParentPort.

Multiple opportunities exist all along the value chain to educate consumers and signpost existing safety settings but these are often ignored by government and industry alike. We therefore recommend that the Government and industry representatives draw up new guidelines for improving the communication of safety settings, improving training for retailers, developing family friendly kite-marking for manufacturers and retailers and introducing voluntary signposting of security settings during log-in and configuration of devices.

4. What are the pros and cons of network filtering?

The Inquiry considered two key aspects of this debate: the level at which network filtering could be applied and the arguments for and against changing the current emphasis in filtering from Opt-Out to Opt-In.

Network Filtering

Network-level filters broadly fall into two categories; **whole network filters** that apply the same filters and content restrictions to all accounts collectively serviced by Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and **single account network filters** that apply filters at an individual account level so that each device connected to a single internet connection is covered by the same settings.

ISPs already filter content at a whole network level depending on the law or practice in individual countries and in some cases, in response to commercial considerations. British ISPs acted collectively in 1996 to apply whole network filtering to child abuse imagery by creating the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) to monitor sites displaying abuse and then later working collectively with the IWF to block access to identified sites.

The single account network filter is standard in many commercial settings and in schools and last year TalkTalk became the first British ISP to offer a single account network filter for home broadband with the introduction of HomeSafe which protects any device connected to a home internet connection with one universal content filter.

Both whole and single account network filters offer two main advantages when compared to the current use of device-level filters. First, the ISP instead of the end-user assumes the job of installing and maintaining content filters and second, the same level of filtering protects multiple devices.

Given the failings of the current device-level filters, the Panel believes that it would be desirable to offer customers single account network filters as standard and that ISPs should be tasked with rolling out a suitable product within twelve months.

The Inquiry heard that there is no clear agreement yet in terms of which filters are most appropriate and there is little factual evidence, particularly around costs and technological issues, to draw on in analysing the best solutions. Our investigation was limited by the fact that BT, Sky and Virgin Media declined to give evidence to the Inquiry and would only discuss these issues in a private setting; however, their main objections appeared to be ideological, not commercial.

We were able to establish from TalkTalk that there was no loss of network speed with their HomeSafe product. Others said that developing a whole network filter would slow internet access speeds, but could not quantify the rate of change, or any costs associated with it.

We would like to see more factual analysis of a whole network solution including the relative cost of creating an industry-wide standard instead of individual applications for each ISP's customer base, before reaching final conclusions on the feasibility of whole network filters.

Opt-Out or Opt-In?

The most controversial aspect of the filtering debate is whether filters should be set so that consumers have to block undesirable content using the current "Opt-Out" filters, or whether consumers should choose to receive this material via an "Opt-In" system.

Many British mobile phone companies, who in several cases also supply fixed line broadband services, apply a voluntary Opt-In system for their mobile customers. The largest operators apply an adult content bar by default on every account, which can only be lifted by proving that the end user is over 18. As BT's website states:

"To comply with a new UK voluntary code of practice, the BT Content Administrator Service has used a barring and filter mechanism to restrict access to all WAP and Internet sites that are considered to have an "over 18" status. If you're a Mobile Broadband Customer and would like to have the bar lifted you will need to prove that you are over the age of 18. We can validate you're over 18 if you've your home telephone or home broadband service with BT; or have registered your BT Mobile BB Prepay Account and have a saved Credit or Debit Card on your account (this is used to verify that you're over the age of 18)".

An Opt-In system with a default setting to block adult content is also standard in many commercial settings and in schools and the technology behind the content filters is well advanced. Several smaller internet service providers distinguish themselves commercially by offering "clean" or BBFC-rated content with an Opt-In option to access adult material.

Our consumer research suggests that an Opt-In system would be popular, with almost six out of ten people saying they would use this sort of service, although this varies strikingly by gender with 77 per cent of women saying that they would use this service but only 37 per cent of men.²²

²² YouGov Survey on 2nd-3rd February, 2011

The Panel heard the following evidence in support of an Opt-In system:

- Both Ofcom and the British Board of Film Classification have well-developed and accepted ratings of adult content and there are existing device-level filters and single account network filters which also rely on developed technology for classifying age-inappropriate material. There would therefore be no need to develop new definition and ratings of adult material;
- A blunt age verification check could easily take place for the primary account holder, who has to have access to a bank account in order to set up internet access, but it would be more of a technological challenge (but by no means an insurmountable one) to develop multiple levels of access for adults and children sharing the same single account network. This granularity of access is already a feature of many account-level network filters, such as those applied in schools, where the content available for children changes with their age;
- A number of companies already maintain the content analysis and mapping that underpins existing filtering systems and the cost of extending this service, particularly for a collective solution, developed and maintained together by ISPs, would be insignificant.

An effective Opt-In system would have to tackle a number of issues including: the definitions and rating of adult content; the design of an age verification check; the need for different levels of access in a household; how to avoid reducing access speed; minimising the cost of providing the service and ensuring that this protection did not lead to consumer complacency.

Some witnesses raised concerns that an Opt-In model might encourage more parental complacency as there would still be locations in which adult content is available and emphasised the need for parents to talk to children about internet safety. However, we heard that providing age-rated content, for example with material classified and filtered as suitable for different ages, might give parents new opportunities to discuss the appropriateness of filtered material in the way that age restrictions on social media accounts can prompt discussion of internet safety around milestone birthdays.

No evidence was presented to the Panel that an Opt-In system would slow down internet access speed or reduce performance, but we did hear of concerns about the legality and practicality of switching all existing installed accounts to a new form of access without customer consultation.

The primary objections to an Opt-In approach are ideological. Witnesses argued that if adults have to approach their ISPs to ask to look at pornography then this is “moving towards private sector censorship which is dangerous”. However, others rejected this argument, saying that since the adult material is still available and adults can choose whether or not to access it, then this could not be considered to be censorship.

The Inquiry believes that a move to single account network filters is desirable and that ISPs should be tasked with rolling out a suitable product within 12 months as part of revised implementation plans for the Active Choice protocol.

Many consumers, especially women, would welcome an Opt-In filtering system for adult content but several key design and implementation issues would need to be addressed, including the design of an age-verification interface and the need to design a granular permissioning system so that households can maintain different levels of access for different family members.

The main argument against an Opt-In system is based on ideology and we find it perverse that companies who apply an adult content block for their customers accessing the internet via a mobile device would argue against introducing a similar system for their fixed broadband customers.

We believe Government should launch a formal consultation on introducing network filters with an Opt-In setting and include a call for any evidence that opt-in filtering would impose undue costs or slow network speeds.

We accept that providing an Opt-In system might create a risk of complacency among parents but think that in practice it would offer far better overall protection for children in the online environment than the current system where only a minority of households install device-level filters.

5. Should the Government introduce regulation to provide further protection for children?

The publication of internet content has historically been controlled only by reference to national laws and regulations and many argue that it is this lack of a formal regulatory regime that underpins the internet's creativity and explosive growth. Recent calls for more global regulation from French President Nicolas Sarkozy were rejected by governments including the UK, Germany and Russia in the belief that over-regulation of the internet would not only limit economic growth but restrict liberty. Countries rely instead on national laws and regulation to address the unwanted effects of the internet and self-regulation amongst internet companies.

Britain has no specific legislation targeting the issue of children's access to harmful content on the internet although parts of existing laws, such as Section 127 of the *Communications Act 2003* which proscribes the improper use of a public electronic communications network are relevant and this has recently been applied, apparently for the first time, to a social networking site (Twitter). Online activity is also subject to general offline legislation such as the *Obscene Publications Act 1959* which outlaws the publication of obscene material, including child pornography and extreme adult pornography; the *Human Rights Act 1998*; and more recently, the *Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008* which made it illegal to possess extreme pornography.

Despite this lack of clear regulatory guidance, British Internet Service Providers (ISPs) could be said to have led the world in self-regulation when they acted collectively in 1996 to restrict consumer access to child abuse imagery by creating the Internet Watch Foundation to monitor sites displaying this abuse and acting together to block identified sites.

The Panel heard from witnesses who argued that a self-regulation regime among ISPs that led to the creation of an Opt-In filtering system, would be better than having a solution imposed by government as more draconian regulation could act as a drag on internet growth which is very important to Britain: the UK's internet economy made up 8.3 per cent of GDP in 2010 and enjoys a growth rate that is almost double that of many global competitors such as the USA, Germany, France and China.²³

However, it is unclear how specific Government regulation supporting network filtering with Opt-In content would harm this economic contribution. Network filters would apply only to the distribution of content to households by Internet Service Providers (a mature

²³ The Internet Economy in the G-20, Boston Consulting Group March 2012

and well established market segment), and the Inquiry is not persuaded that this action would damage the growth potential of the UK's broader internet economy. Moreover, it is not clear that ISPs will fully prioritise this issue without a strong nudge from the Government.

Witnesses also raised the problem of a lack of joined-up accountability for internet content distribution between monitoring and regulatory bodies such as the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), Ofcom, the Association for Television on Demand (ATVOD), the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) and the BBFC. Regulators said they were frustrated by the overlaps but also by the gaps in accountability and witnesses referred to an "alphabet soup" of regulators. The Panel believes this will become even more problematic as technology converges onto single content delivery platforms.

The Panel applauded recent attempts by regulators to work together that have resulted in initiatives such as ParentPort, the new one-stop website where parents can go to complain, comment or seek advice about inappropriate content in any media, but we believe that one regulator could be given a lead in this area.

The Inquiry concluded that the Government, while urging ISPs to reach a collective solution to introduce single account network-level filters with Opt-In functionality for adult content, should also seek backstop legal powers to intervene should the ISPs fail to implement an appropriate solution.

We also concluded that the Government should consider a new regulatory structure for online content, with one regulator given a lead role in the oversight and monitoring of internet content distribution and the promotion of internet safety initiatives.

Formal Evidence Sessions

House of Commons

Parliamentary Inquiry into Online Child Protection

Oral Evidence Sessions One & Two

Committee Room 8

Thursday 8th September

ORAL EVIDENCE SESSION ONE

Claire Perry: Ladies and Gentlemen thank you, they are coming; this is what happens in politics I am told! And also the other thing that happens is votes, and we are scheduled to vote quite shortly, which we will race down and do as quickly as possible and race back. So there will be a quick, probably 10-minute pause while we all disappear to do that. But I suppose to start, a huge thank you to our witnesses and to our interested attendees. This all came out of a discussion way back last year about online child protection options for perhaps improving the way that children use the internet, and in particular helping them and steering them away from inappropriate material in a way that doesn't come across as censorship. I mean, I think the very important point to make is that we're trying to establish

today whether this is actually a problem and then in our next session we'll be talking to Internet Service Providers and other companies involved in the space – Facebook, Microsoft, Google – about what solutions we can collectively do. I know it's a debate that many of you including the former Home Secretary have had over the years and I think there is a sense amongst Parliamentarians, there are about 60 of us involved with this organisation, well it's not an organisation, it's one of these things that came out of nowhere, and rather than formalise it with an All Party Group, we thought we would just crack on with an inquiry from all political parties, from both Houses, who just think that the time is coming - with technological convergence and increasing usage of the internet as effectively a mass market communication vehicle - that something needs to be done. So what we are going to do today is kick off and I know we have plenty of people attending, some of whom are giving evidence in the second session. There are witness biographies around if people need them that just outline who we've got. But just to summarise who we've got, we've got Deirdre Sanders, who is from The Sun who has been an agony aunt, if that is the right term (?) for 30 years. And who has written extensively on this problem as a result of the letters and requests she received on a daily basis. Jacqui Smith, the former Home Secretary (interruption – division bell rings)... Will you excuse us, talk about false start, we will be back as quickly as possible.

I suggest we continue, it's all being recorded by the way, so those who are drifting in or still stuck in the lobby will be getting transcripts. So I was talking about investigations. The Rt Honourable Jacqui Smith, who recently led a personal

research project into pornography and how it affects young children. We have Jerry Barnett who is the Managing Director of the largest video on demand pornographic site, Strictly Broadband. Justine Roberts, the founder of Mumsnet, an important online forum. Julie Bentley, the Chief Executive of the Family Planning Association, and Will Gardner, who is the CEO of Childnet International and thank you so much joining us. We've got about 50 minutes, so I'm sure we'll run out of time to discuss this. What I'm going to suggest is that I kick off with some questions and colleagues jump in, and really a question to all of you, which is, have you seen evidence that children are watching, accessing online pornography? And then the exam question is; 'Is this perceived to be a problem?' It has always been the case that children find magazines, see things, this is how many of us grew up you know learning about certain things about the birds and the bees. But what is different now? And if I can start with - if we just go down the panel - Julie, if you would like to start, thank you for joining us.

Julie Bentley: Thank you very much for asking me to kick things off. Things have changed yes, since I was a teenager, it was magazines mainly and we saw that new technologies are making things much more available. In terms of "do we know whether it's being viewed?", I think it's about 73% of households now have internet access. 52% of children have reported that they have access to computers in their rooms and therefore are unsupervised by parents or adults and about half of all young people use mobile devices such as Blackberry phones etc. and report that they have looked at pornography online. Recent research last year in a magazine said that one out of three 10 year olds have viewed porn and

81% of 14-16 year olds have looked at pornography at home. So I think the answer to the question; "are they are seeing it?" I think one would be confident to say that yes, they are. In terms of the impact of that and whether it should be something we are worried about, I think that there isn't too much evidence or research about at the moment about how it is impacting on young people's behaviour, but there is in terms of how it's impacting on the kind of attitudes, expectations and self-experience of young people that are looking at pornography. We are aware that pornography seems to have a direct influence on young men's ideas about what should be included in sex, in terms of the sexual "repertoire" - for want of a better word -because what they are witnessing is generally speaking, fantasy, as opposed to an everyday normality of a sexual relationship. Young people haven't had the education outside of pornography to help them contextualise what they are seeing in pornography. Lots of young people are growing up thinking that this is what sex is and actually they are finding that this is skewing their understanding about what they are meant to be able to do. Young men are having difficulty in understanding actually what young women want, and young women are seeing pornography and thinking "am I meant to look like that? Am I meant to like that?" And it's having an impact on young people's self-image and self-esteem - both young men and young women we think - because actually young men watch pornography and have the same views about, "okay is that what I'm meant to do and want to do? etc". I think one of the biggest problems is context, and young people need to have good quality relationships and sex education outside of the home and in the home, and that we need better support and for parents to

have these frank conversations with their children to help them understand this. Because it isn't just in pornography, it's all around us now in society with these sexualised images and our young people need to understand and contextualise that because it can have an impact on them.

Claire Perry: Thank you, Mrs Smith, would you like to comment?

Jacqui Smith: Well first of all I think that I would agree with everything Julie said, but if I could sort of focus on the people I met and what I heard during the course of the investigation and programme that I made: The first thing I thought was very interesting was that the people involved in making pornography themselves, who were concerned about the extent to which free and un-age restricted access through the internet was enabling young people, who they themselves didn't think should be watching their material, to be able to access it. Now, part of that concern is obviously going to come from a commercial viewpoint because, and Jerry may have to say more about this, one of the points that was made very strongly to me was that those people who are producing mainstream, or what we might call the more respectable end of pornography, felt that their market was being undermined by the ability of adults and young people to be able to access pornography for free, to a large extent, and unrestricted on the internet. That was the first point but they also, speaking as parents and as people who were concerned about the society they lived in, struck me as being worried about the fact that what they produced and what they knew were being produced for adults was being accessed by people they didn't think should access it. The second thing I found interesting was the ability to be able to talk to counsellors ...one person in

particular who counsels couples who actually herself uses pornography sometimes in couples' counseling, but felt that the availability, particularly for younger people in the way which Julie describes, was changing the sort of expectations and behaviour that people had about what they could expect to get from a sexual relationship. Changing it over the longer term as well. Just as an aside, I did find it rather bizarre myself, but there is one thing that pornographers and teenagers have in common and that is that they think that sex between people over the age of 14 and someone at 40, is somehow weird and fetishistic -but the feeling of that counselor was that it was having an impact on people's long term relationships, and the other thing, and I'm sure Deirdre could comment on this more, were people who had had young people coming to them not just to say they were worried about their use of pornography, but coming to them and asking them questions about sexual activity and sexual behaviour and that it was extremely unlikely that they discovered for themselves and almost certainly could only have discovered from watching pornography, almost certainly on the internet.

Claire Perry: Thank you, Mr Barnett, if we could turn to you. I must say that I did check out the website today and I think one of the issues is the availability of "free-to-view content" if you like, I mean you have a couple of DVDs like "Sluts who like it hard" and "Big white booty", which I'm not sure we can show here given the firewalls, but you know again this is an issue that there is quite a lot of free stuff available sitting outside of what I'm sure you have quite good age protection mechanisms yourself but I would love to hear your views on Jacqui's points.

Jerry Barnett: On the original question; 'Are children seeing this material', then, you know it's certainly suggested that a high proportion of them are. That is generally teenagers. So it's generally unusual for pre-pubescent children to develop pornography addiction. The interest obviously arises from puberty and from that point on, people are discovering it in various ways and starting to see it in increasing numbers. Whether it's a problem I'm not sure about, but from an industry point of view, the industry does everything it can to stay on the right side of the law and to be in place not to attract the attention of campaigners or the law and so that means doing everything that's possible to sell it to over 18s only. But from a more general point of view, does it cause harm to people under 18? The evidence appears to be that it's not. There is a lot of academic research into the effects of porn on individuals, on their sex lives, their attitudes towards women, and on the effects on wider society and generally the correlations appear to be positive. So not talking specifically about teenagers looking at porn but in general, the availability of porn in society seems to correlate with lower sexual violence in society and with better attitudes in general towards women. I recommend people look for a scientific American article which is online called "The Sunny Side Of Smart", which summarises quite a few different studies and generally, as I say, correlates the availability of porn with positive results in terms of sexual violence, attitudes towards women and so on. I think, as Jacqui said, the issue of free material - again speaking from an industry point of view - since free material started on YouTube three to four years ago, the industry has been completely, literally, decimated. I mean it grew massively from the mid-90s until about I think it was 2007 when the first

YouTube adult website appeared and it has been in massive recession ever since that point. So the industry would love to see the free material vanish and, as Jacqui said, it is the primary commercial point of view to go back to the good old days of being able to sell it at higher prices. A couple of other points that have been made; Children... Julie gave some figures of how many children have PCs in their own rooms, but very effective filtering is available, so because 40% or whatever of children have access to PCs in their own rooms, doesn't mean that they all have access to adult material. There is very good filtering available. There are a couple of labelling systems; one is called R.T.A which was developed by an offshoot of the US Adult Industry to make sure that their content wasn't available to children. It's restricted to adults and called R.T.A, the other one, and I'm sure you people have read about the launch of a technology called MetaSurf which again is a labelling technology which makes filtering and identification of material very easy. So the adult industry has for a long time been investing in these enabling technologies and its becoming increasingly cheap or even free for people to install these and use these on their children's computers. As far as mobile access is concerned, mobiles are blocked by default so you actually need to demonstrate the relative identity before you have adult content unblocked on a mobile, so that's harder for children to access. On the body image thing, I mean actually it seems pornography is far more democratic when it comes to body image than most media is. And so you know, Jacqui mentioned the 'over the age 40' for example which is actually quite a popular pornographic niche.

Claire Perry: My children would be horrified to hear that!

Jerry Barnett: This certainly shows that pornographers and consumers of porn are far less censorious over which bodies they want to look at than compared to The Sun's Page 3. And finally I'll just agree with Julie that far better education is needed. The porn industry does not want to be responsible for educating under 18s. We don't want that responsibility. We don't set out to do that, but educators should set out to do that.

Claire Perry: Justine, your online forum where lots of parents come together, I suppose not just mothers despite the name, to talk about these issues. Do you have anything to tell us on this?

Justine Roberts: I mean, is it widespread, well I think if you do a very quick search on Mumsnet and porn, you get a very good taste of what comes up and this was literally in the last month: "My 6 year old searched for Disney fairies and got hard-core porn". "My 10 year old son has found porn on the net help, help, help". "My 7 year old son has just been looking at internet porn, what do I do?" "Please help, I've just been out of the house for one and a half hours leaving an 11 year old son in the house alone and he spent the whole time watching YouTube porn'. It goes on and on and on and a lot of questions afterwards saying, "Is this normal behaviour, what do I do? Is it harmful?" From surveying Mumsnetters, their response is 84% of them worry that it is harmful and what they really worry about is not so much kids accessing porn, particularly pubescent kids who will access anything they can get their hands on, it's more of the type and nature of the pornography on offer. It's an internet fact that it is so hard-core and I think that a particular worry is that it skews people's impressions, as Julie said, of what sex is all about. It's accessing porn before you've

had any relationships or you've had real education of what sex is about. And I'll just read you a quote I just picked up today, "I'm not against pornography per se, when boys hit puberty it is the time for pornography. It depicts women as subservient to a nymphomaniac or I see access to pornography as something that can be better for boys. However, the internet has broadened the variety and specialism of pornography available and young boys will have damaging expectations of women, and as they grow up, young women will have equally damaging self-worth". And so I think that's the major worry and there is the secondary worry about the stumble across for very young children, and what that does in terms of, just as a parent, dealing with that question well before you want to have that conversation.

Claire Perry: Thank you. Will, if I can bring you in...

Will Gardner: Our organisation goes to schools and talks to children and talks to parents about internet safety issues, and using it safely and responsibly. So when we go into schools we don't ask children "have you seen porn?" in that sort of direct fashion, but we do receive anecdotal evidence of children having used it and there's research outside of the work that we do. Later on we will tell you more specifically about the results of a recent survey on the percentage of young people accessing pornography in the UK and the work that we do. We find that children's natural curiosity can lead them to pornography and I was talking to a colleague yesterday who was using a dictionary analogy that when we were children we would look in a dictionary for rude words, and if you are going to do that on the internet you are going to get a different level of information than you

would have had a few years back. It is much more in your face. We have heard stories about children typing in CBoobies by accident rather than CBeebies, leading to different reactions. There are stories around of children accessing this content through curiosity, by accident, by sharing it with each other and when we are talking to teenagers on the issues that we talk about, it's about children creating images of themselves and how they represent themselves online in social networking and other environments.

When we talk to parents this is a big concern they have and the advice that we are giving outlines a range of different strategies and the questions we get are all around: "How do I?" "I bought my child an iPod touch, what do I need to do to help protect them from this content?" So there aren't a lot of technical-related questions that parents have when they are talking about issues around content "How do I protect my child from?" "Is it ok for my child to go on this site?" "What filtering software should I use?", so there is a range of issues that come up and we are trying to provide them with a wide range of strategies that can help them such as, bookmarking sites, have favourites, to use filtering, to have an open conversation, to encourage your child to tell you, have a family agreement, close the screen if it is a laptop, turn off the screen if it is a PC. If there is an image which is making them upset, there are practical things which they can do. We are providing parents and carers with a range of practical information with which they can deal with this issue.

Claire Perry: Thank you. Deidre, you've been counselling families on all sorts of issues for a very long time. We would love to hear your thoughts.

Deidre Sanders: I don't want to just repeat because it would just be reading everything back on what everyone's been saying, a slightly different perspective - Julie talks about research - and I am hearing all the time, it has escalated since 2008, from younger and younger people who are definitely accessing pornography, and there are different aspects of it that are worrying. Yes, it is definitely forming attitudes, definitely. I am hearing from a 13 year old girl being pressured into trying a threesome, the mind boggles, really. There is certain behaviour I only used to have bald 40 year olds asking me about it, now under-16s are thinking about it. And suddenly it is all about body image, boys are supposed to have a nine inch penis and they should have sex at around nine and a half, and so their attitudes are really being formed, and I think we really do need to understand this very realistic worry. I actually hear less about the younger children. I get the odd one about that, but that seems to be less of a problem. When we work on what we are going to do about this, all the ideas for ISPs, I am absolutely behind that, but particular points I want to make are that not all parents are concerned and caring. A huge number of parents are not going to block the PCs, because they are going to watch the pornography themselves. I do believe a lot of teenagers are just shocked rigid by what they come across on their dad's computer or their mum's phone, so we have just got to remember that. If we are going to tackle this problem, we have to think that it cannot all be through blocks and parents, seeing as adults are not all very responsible, and I have evidence from a 12 year old who is in the paper today. I am actually going to leave with you a longer version of that, it's got lots of quotes and stuff in it. There is definitely an addictive quality, and I hear that from adults and kids - they get

further drawn in, and in to more hard-core material and spend longer time on it. I think the ones that are particularly vulnerable are the ones, almost by definition, the ones whose parents are neglectful. They may be distracted by their relationship problems, or they have substance abuse issues, all sorts of terrible things that go on in lots of homes. If the only emotional warmth they are going to get or buzzy feeling they get is through watching pornography, they are going to be drawn to that because it is the only good thing they are getting, and because everything else in their life is pretty grim. I think we have to have something there that is actually for the young people themselves. It can't all be about blocks, controls and parents. There has got to be some resource for young people, if they've got a problem with watching pornography and they Google it, there should be broad self-help techniques of how you wean yourself off it, and what is likely to lie behind it. It's not just about sex education but about something that's going on in their family that they need help with. So we just need to be aware of that, and that's the other point we have to make, somehow we have got to balance this with not making kids feel that very normal sexual urges are awful. I don't want to see us back to the attitudes of seventy years ago and which I still hear about from young people in different parts of the world. It is a great part of our lives when we're allowed to enjoy it and in the right context and in a good relationship, so we have got to get that balance right.

Claire Perry: Thank you. Colleagues? Mark? Yes.

Mark Garnier: I'd like to ask, if I may, just an incredibly basic question, which is what constitutes pornography and what

doesn't? To start off addressing my question perhaps to Deirdre, you and Jerry, if I may, as clearly what you do you would classify as pornography and that must be very very clear. Deirdre, what do you hold of Page 3 of your newspaper? Perhaps what comes out is titillation but the question has two elements, first is where do you draw the line? And where I have a certain amount of confusion is when you come across these late night programmes, and what are regarded as sexual guidance programmes which can be very therapeutic, but also can be quite fruity in their content. So the first part of that question is where is the line if there is such a thing? The second point is clearly that line, if you're an adult, is probably reasonably defined, but is there a different definition of that line as you look at younger children? Again, if you talk about a national newspaper coming out, then most children will come across The Sun, and I'm not passing judgment, I'm just saying that as a fact of life and the Editor of The Sun presumably accepts that it's okay that a 7 or 8 year old might stumble across The Sun, and therefore is an acceptable accident if you like. So what do people generally feel is acceptable given a certain age?

Deidre Sanders: They often say one person's erotica is another person's hard-core pornography, it is really really hard to draw that line and I would like to point out certainly that the Editor of The Sun thinks it's okay, but it's 9 million people actually; 3 million who buy it and 9 million read it. I have to say I can see it is a problem for legislators, actually from my perspective it's not really because I think these kids, what they're looking at is way over line, what they're seeing is too much.

Claire Perry: Jacqui...

Jacqui Smith: Well first off there is of course a legal definition of pornography which is pretty well tested and used, and effectively it is material for which its sole principal purpose is arousal, and it's pretty well understood by those who are responsible for classification and it's pretty well understood by legislators. But I do think that Deirdre's second point is fundamentally important. What we're talking about here, I don't think anyone in this room would have any problem defining as pornography, so in particular - and I probably didn't make it clear enough in my first response - what I was most surprised to come across in my investigation was the availability, with no age restriction and free on the internet, of pornography including group sex, anal sex, double penetration, apparently having sex with strangers, women in the middle of a group of men who were masturbating over their face. I don't think there is a problem of definition there, what there is, is a problem of access and that is available without age restriction and without any requirement to pay, which of course would be the only way in which you could limit access to it.

Claire Perry: Julie.

Julie Bentley: When we prepared our policy statement on pornography, our starting point was the definition of pornography, and the one that we used to formulate our policy around was: writings, pictures, films, etc. designed to stimulate sexual excitement and the production of such materials. One of the important things to be clear about, there's also something called the Obscene Publications Act which is not pornography and there's things that include children and that is not pornography either, that is just totally illegal. So I think we often get

confused between those and we need to be really clear about that.

But I think for me I go back to context which is whatever young people see needs to be contextualised, and for me, seeing a woman in a newspaper with her breasts on display is just as much a contextualisation for a young person as maybe seeing somebody having sex on a film, and what we now do is work with parents. We run a parenting programme called "Speakeasy" which teaches parents how to talk to their children about relationships and sex. We've worked with 15,000 parents in the last ten years and increasingly, pornography is something they are asking us about and they're worried about. But it's such a taboo that people feel very, very uncomfortable talking about it, and we also have teachers who tell us they are coming across children in the playground who are looking at YouTube videos of people having sex and they fear talking to children about it because they feel they will get into trouble if they speak to children about pornography. We have to change this because we need adults to take back responsibility of being an adult and therefore help young people understand this. It's far worse for a young person to have watched something pornographic and to say to them "you shouldn't have seen that, that's wrong" than just say "okay this is what you've seen so let's have a conversation about this". We also run a training program for teachers to help them do what's called "Fantasy vs. Reality" which helps them understand the context themselves and gives them the language to know how to talk to young people about these issues. But I think for me it's less about what is the definition because it can be anything from Page 3 right through to any of the things that Jacqui just talked about, but

what is critical is that we're never going to 100 per cent stop young people from seeing this material and what we've got to do is help them understand it and actually issues around consent and coercion are really big for young people to understand because increasingly young people are quite confused about those issues. And also, the whole mention of confidence and the issue of self-esteem and making choices for yourself and all of that is really difficult to do, but very possible to do with helping and supporting adults who know how to do it.

Claire Perry: Jerry, strict legal definitions that guide the industry?

Jerry Barnett: The industry is basically guided by what would be considered obscene, so the Obscene Publications Act. That's actually very vague because it's decided by a jury so that makes it quite difficult. But obviously a trial in London may have a different result to a trial in North Wales. In reality, the BBFC interprets the Obscene Publications Act to anything pictorial. So what's considered porn would generally either get an R18 for hard-core material or an 18 for material that's kind of soft or considered educational or deemed to have artistic merit.

Mark Garnier: Is all your content checked before you put it online?

Jerry Barnett: Yes, we have to because of the Obscene Publications Act.

Mark Garnier: Is that the case for international...

Jerry Barnett: No

Mark Garnier: So you're subscribing to a code for this country but anybody in this

country can look at any other country's pornography which doesn't have any code at all?

Jerry Barnett: For sure, even though, to be honest, the same standards are pretty much becoming spread across the Western world, so British standards of pornography pretty much have minor differences from American standards and with mainland Europe. So standards aren't that different. There are other territories like Japan, where what was considered acceptable was just off the scale from anything we would consider acceptable here. The good news of that was the appearance of the web, actually cast the light on what was happening in Japan with regard to rape and child porn and so on. Actually, it's massively cleaner than it was 15 years ago simply because of the outrage from the rest of the world having seen it after that point.

So I think the line is that pornography in this country is supposed to be seen by 18s and over but educational material may get an 18-certificate rather than R18. That still says that it shouldn't be watched by under-18s and perhaps an 18 certificate should be looked at more carefully. Generally, violence and swearing used to fall into the 18+ category and now it comes down to 15 or 12, whereas sex is firmly 18 and above. So it's a typically British thing that we are generally more horrified about consenting sexual behaviour than by violence.

Claire Perry: Jerry, I want to bring in Andrew, but can I just ask one very quick point of clarification? There's a lot of material that effectively sits free as I think Jacqui pointed out. Again there are quite graphic descriptions of your movies available immediately without any age verification and quite a lot of still imagery.

At what point do you try and check for age verification? Is that when you actually go through a registration process which is the next stage after the initial “teaser” if you like?

Jerry Barnett: It’s generally done by, well there’s two things: It’s generally done by payment.

Claire Perry: So if someone has a credit card, they’re assumed to be over 18?

Jerry Barnett: Yes, we don’t take electron cards because they can obviously be used by someone under 18. We only take cards that can be used by over 18s. The other thing I want to make again is that labelling combined with filtering is readily available. We can’t fully control what’s viewed, but labelling and filtering schemes can.

Jacqui Smith: Although to be clear, the site I was talking about, you start with a thing that says ‘Are you over 18?’ and then if you click yes you access the site.

Jerry Barnett: It would still be blocked by filtering.

Jacqui Smith: If you had filtering...

Andrew Selous: I’m going to come back, Jerry, to something you said when you gave your evidence to begin with, that you made sure you stayed on the right side of the law which I’m pleased to hear. I just wanted to know, do you personally, your business, or the industry, if you can call it that, and I know that YouTube is obviously quite wide... Do you have any internal standards to try and do what you think is right? Do you have a code of conduct? I mean, there’s the law and there’s doing what’s right; the law doesn’t always cover what people would think is

correct and what sort of should be done. I mean, Claire’s mentioned the free content on your site which is clearly available to everyone – Are you just waiting to be told something’s illegal to stop it or do you look critically and think is this right, should we be doing it? Do those conversations ever take place?

Jerry Barnett: Yeah they do happen, I mean there are some fairly difficult lines to tread. In general, if a DVD arrives with an R18 certificate the BBFC have done the job for us. If it doesn’t, then we have to make the same call. We spent a lot of time talking to the BBFC and understanding how they make judgment calls. Some of them are very fine-lined, but if it doesn’t come with a certificate we make the decision to say whether it would be accepted by the BBFC and take advice from the police and from psychologists. We can be thinking of so much content out there that we are thinking about what we put up. So for example, a lot of the American content has a racial undertone that we would probably exclude.

Andrew Selous: But on the free content bit, your line seems to be “well, there are filters out there, it’s up to the parents to get the filters, that’s not really our problem we’re not terribly bothered if a 6 or 7 year old stumbles across the free content on our site”. Would that be a correct assessment?

Jerry Barnett: Some of our movies have trailers that are typically one to two minutes and come from the studios. They’ll generally be well within our 18 guidelines. But its true there’s no age verification around the trailers for the main film.

Andrew Selous: But you don’t think you have a personal responsibility to be

responsible for 6 and 7 year olds that are looking for Disney and fairies who stumble across your trailers?

Jerry Barnett: I think the idea that a 6 or 7 year old stumbles across our site by accident is kind of mythical. It may have happened ten years ago when search engines weren't very sophisticated.

Andrew Selous: That wasn't what Justine just said now.

Claire Perry: To be fair, Jerry's site is called Strictly Broadband, which is not necessarily something that will pop up in a search...sounds like S&M for computer geeks or something...

Jerry Barnett: The site can be found by Google or search terms. If you're looking for porn, it's very easy to find it. It's not as easy to stumble across porn by accident by using non-sexual terms. Labelling and filtering has to be the mechanism for blocking under-18s from accessing content. Most of our material isn't accessible by under-18s anyway if they're accessing on a non-filtered machine.

Claire Perry: Thank you Jerry. Andrea let's hear from you.

Andrea Leadsom: Thanks, I'd just like to ask you a bit about different ages because obviously there's a wealth of difference between a 15 year old who would definitely have a view of what sex was all about and 7 or even 10 year old who potentially wouldn't and who might actually be quite traumatised. And in particular, something you said, Jerry, about how you don't want to be responsible for children's sex education, that that should be happening somewhere else; I think this is one of the difficult areas, you have the post-puberty child and

the pre-puberty child and I'd just be interested to hear your thoughts on, how can - short of trying to... effectively as we're proposing get over 18s to opt-in to internet porn and otherwise it's completely blocked wholesale - what other alternatives are there to protect particularly younger children, pre-pubescent children, who could well be absolutely terrified because they wouldn't have any conception of what on earth was going on. How could you protect them in any other way than via a total ban where over 18s have to sign in to receive porn?

Jerry Barnett: First of all, very very small numbers of pre-pubescent children find porn. They are tiny numbers of those who are curious to find it as that comes with puberty. So with regard to post-pubescent kids, I think it would be interesting for educators and psychologists to look at for example some of the educational materials available at 18 and to decide whether another certificate, maybe a 15 certificate, would be beneficial for teenagers. In terms of the wholesale blocking idea, I think it's horrendous for a number of reasons. One is for the simple free speech reason, it could never happen in the US because of the First Amendment, the idea that the Government could decide what content to block. But more importantly, every household with children in it also has adults in it, and those adults have every right to look at adult material and to enjoy it.

Andrea Leadsom: But of course they could, this isn't banning or prohibition, this is opt-in...

Jerry Barnett: But your solution therefore isn't effective as people will unblock it and have the same problems.

Andrea Leadsom: What you're then doing is what we've done throughout history which is to take away the rights of the children and give them to the parents in order that the parents look after the children, and the problem we have in society is when parents choose not to look after their children. But at least by having that block we're giving the parents that opportunity to look after their children and if they choose not to do it, then they face the consequences. Whereas at the moment, they don't have the ability to protect their children.

Jerry Barnett: It's very unfair to say that parents who look at porn in their house don't have the interest of their children at heart.

Andrea Leadsom: No, but quite clearly you as a parent can look at porn when the children have gone to bed or when they're out of the room and then you can block it again. That's the point, is that you as parents can look after your child if that porn isn't twenty-four-seven available.

Jerry Barnett: Filtering is available but blocking wholesale isn't something you can switch on and off at ease. It would be something you'd have to phone your ISP for. As I understand it that's there just to make it harder for adults to look at porn.

Claire Perry: I think we can save the discussion of options for the next session and again that there needs to be new answers is something we can all agree with. Will, you wanted to comment.

Will Gardner: I just want to touch on that question about younger children. It's interesting to understand how a website can be confident really about what age children who are visiting their website actually are. We do see research and I've

mentioned some of the research that sees the level of access to sexual images for 9 to 12 year olds. For that age category, the percentage is small but there's an awful lot of children who are accessing the internet at that age so it's important to recognise that so although it's a lesser of a percentage compared to older children, those children are more likely to be bothered and upset by what they've seen so I think that there's a difference there. Certainly when we're talking to parents of children of a younger age we are outlining a range of strategies for bookmarking sites and favourites which means children can access their favourite sites without having to search the internet for example, there are practical steps that parents can take. Filtering provides one in that armoury of strategies that parents do have and we work hard to make sure they're aware of that.

Claire Perry: Jacqui, you wanted to comment.

Jacqui Smith: I just wanted to say I may be misunderstanding the nature of the questions but I think there's a potential danger that people are focusing very much on younger children and I completely understand people's concerns about that. I would equally ask you to be concerned about 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 year olds because of the nature of what they're looking at. Now we are not talking about, as much I might disagree with Deirdre about Page 3 of The Sun, we're not talking about 14, 15, 16, 17 year olds looking at Page 3 of The Sun, we're talking about them, through the internet being able to look at for hours on end at extremely hard-core pornography with no restriction on their age and no requirement to pay, and my feeling about that is, that it is potentially even more

dangerous than some children coming across porn...

Claire Perry: Can I just come in, we could sit here for hours, Justine, do you want to comment?

Justine Roberts: Can I just totally accept what Jacqui said and I think we should much be worried about older children. Why do parents not put filters on when 83% say they are worried, why do a similar number not employ filters? And I think that has to come down to ease of use and education. Google Safe Search would stop the example I gave about Disney fairies, that is pretty easy to put on. Most people use Google to search, most young children use a household computer - they are not off on a mobile somewhere - it's pretty easy. Really, there is just an education issue here of parents. Bear in mind, most parents actually are conservative, of course there are a few that don't care.

Deirdre Sanders: I don't think it is that easy to just flip the safe search on and off.

Justine Roberts: Yes, it is. It's like three clicks.

Claire Perry: But there is an assumption that parents are setting up the computers, and we know in many households it's the children that are setting up the computers.

Deidre Sanders: I think Google could do a lot more if they could put it on the front of the site.

Claire Perry: David, I want you bring you in.

David Burrowes: Thank you, this is a fascinating conversation and concerning

as well as some of the things we're hearing. Julie, just to go back on the younger point of the spectrum and then perhaps go back to the points that were raised about the older groups of children. In terms of the evidence you've looked at, could you tell us more about the younger end of the spectrum and if there's any access to children below 9. Is there any more evidence around that? And also the amount of time that these really young children have access to see these images or what they would regard as disturbing?

Julie Bentley: I actually don't have statistics for you on that. I think that often with smaller children seeing maybe because they've got older siblings as well but I am more worried about the older young people where they are in the age of thinking about sex much more. I think it's much less likely that very small children have been on pornography. But I think for us, we work with young people, we run communities and projects with young people, we know that they are looking at it and that it's formulating their roles in sexual relationships and that's why I think the older young group is the one we should be more concerned about. We want to do something about this, it's an issue but at the same time, I'm not sure whether the proposed option of opting-in is necessarily going to work. Why are we taking away the parents responsibility for this, because there are systems there to do it and there are parents that aren't doing it so we need to make sure we support parents to do it. I have a bit of a worry that if it is universal, you have to opt-in, the parents we did refer to earlier that aren't willing or able for whatever reason to parent well enough, they are not going to bother about it anyway and if they like porn they will opt-in and not think about their children. But also I think it closes down the topic, it closes down

that bit. But actually in our society, our children are seeing very sexualised images and going back to your point about what is porn, a lot of people say what we walk past on billboards is porn depending on what your perception of pornography is. We can't close our children down to all of this so we've got to find a different ways of supporting our children to grow up knowing how to protect themselves and understand the context within which they're growing up and what's right for them in their own futures.

David Burrowes: Just to build on that substantive point. Most of you have talked about how this creates some sort of addictive behaviour in terms of viewing and if that's the case there's at least an awareness of sex and probably some sense of sexualisation. And the question really put to you Julie - but others of you will have anecdotal information around this - is what does that mean in terms of sexual activity and the age at which sexual activity starts? Is this having an influence on that?

Julie Bentley: Well, if some people only get sex education from online pornography then they're not going to get into the most appropriate or healthy sexual relationships in their early "sexual career", for a want of a better word. I've talked a lot about a really strong need for good quality relationships and sex education and I know that some people have an anxiety that sex and relationships education actually sexualises young people but in fact all of the evidence shows that if a young person has had really good quality sex and relationships education that addresses issues like these, they delay first sex, have less sexual harm, have less sexual partners and they practise safe sex.

David Burrowes: We're talking about the sort of things like hard-core porn. If they're getting this type of stuff, is there any evidence that suggests that the rate of sexual activity is increasing with younger people or that it's happening earlier?

Julie Bentley: No, there's a widely held public view that all young people are having sex but actually most young people still don't have sex until they are over the age of 16. Most young people don't have underage sex. So I think that it's a misconception that a lot of sex among underage people is happening. But more young people are looking online at pornography and it's influencing their mindset and thinking and their perception of what sexual relationships actually are.

Deidre Sanders: I distinctly remember a girl who was only 13. You've got youngsters who are experimenting with things like group sex, threesomes, anal sex, all sorts of things and they have no emotional maturity, they're very emotionally introverted, probably very needy, and it's almost like a game because they've seen the images and it's normalising what most of us would see and I really hesitate to use the word abnormal, but it's not good nurturing behaviour for a child of that age, it's not going to lead them to happy good and healthy relationships, so they're treating sex as something divorced from any commitment because they could just be doing it with a classmate, they don't even see themselves as boyfriend or girlfriend.

Claire Perry: Can I bring in Fiona Bruce MP?

Fiona Bruce: Thank you Claire. I'm interested to hear from Julie and also Will and what they're doing to try and educate

children to protect themselves and I wonder how prevalent the need is for that when you go to schools. The Department of Education is currently consulting a review of the content of PSHE education. I'm sad to have to even suggest this but is what you're doing something that maybe needs to form part of a submission to the Department so that this kind of protection is available particularly to those who have no parental support?

Julie Bentley: We are responding to the...

Will Gardner: The work we do comes down to a wide range of issues. A child in this day and age needs to have the skills to navigate technology safely and responsibly and to look after themselves and that covers a wide range of different things and content forms one part of that. There's content they're exposed to and content that the child creates themselves including also their conduct in online relations, cyber bullying, grooming and wide-ranging other issues like that. I think it's vital that we do equip young people. PSHE has been a useful way to get into schools, address this PSHE citizenship and this subject area where schools can try to prepare students to be digital citizens in this twenty-first century.

Claire Perry: Harriett did you have a...? I'm so sorry, Jacqui....

Jacqui Smith: The Sex Education Board told me that they thought there should be more sex education for younger people to deal with the impact of online pornography.

Harriett Baldwin: Thank you. Just very quickly really on the technology question because all of this is about online pornography and many teenagers these days will have access to the internet

through their mobile phone. I just wondered if you have a view in terms of what likely patterns there are? Are we finding that more and more children have access to that through 3G technology?

Jerry Barnett: It's much easier on mobiles because several years ago mobiles phone operators created a block so you have to unlock the mobile before you can access that adult material.

Deidre Sanders: From my perspective, the big problem is them sending pictures of body parts and sending each other pictures and you might have a girl who sends a picture of goodness knows what to her boyfriend and then they break up and then he sends it around to the class.

David Burrowes: Is there much evidence of that?

Deidre Sanders: There are girls writing to me distressed because that's what they've done and he's sent it around to the class.

Annette Brooke: I wanted to go to the core of it in that the problem is identified and we have to establish where the responsibility of dealing with the problem actually lies. I'd just be interested in everybody's perspective as to where we should start. It's very easy to say parental responsibility but we're accepting that's really not going to work for some of the most vulnerable, so, beyond educating our parents where really is the next line of responsibility?

Julie Bentley: I think it's no one's place, I think it's a combination. Young people, with almost every aspect of their development, need trusted adults around them, so that's in the home with their parents or extended family, it's also at

school and also in the informal setting, youth clubs, churches and community groups. Our young people if they don't have the trusted place in their own home which we know so many people don't, then there needs to be other places they can go. I think it's very much about an ongoing dialogue through their development and that it's more than one player if you like, that is equipped to enable and has permission to talk to young people about those things. And in an ideal world, in my personal view, the family would be the root of that but we don't live in an ideal world and that often isn't the case so therefore we need to equip our teachers and health professionals to be able to talk to young people about this really difficult issue.

Claire Perry: Justine, what do Mumsnet think about this?

Justine Roberts: When we ask parents about how they deal with these ways, the most popular response was education. The second most popular is that ISPs should do it, that there should be some kind of network filter. But I would stress a large minority of parents on Mumsnet who think that it's a blunt filter and could potentially lead to complacency on the part of the parents and equally used by the Government to restrict civil liberties so it's not an easy answer.

Deidre Sanders: I just think that there should be an online resource for young people themselves, they could easily Google it, and they get something which gives them ideas about why they're feeling so drawn to this and give them all sorts of information and it's a clever way if they include games and stuff, just so they can have something they can access which tells them where to go for help.

Jacqui Smith: Given my history, I will never say that there isn't a role for education. But I just want people to think about the economics about this. Remember that Jerry said right at the very beginning that the mainstream pornography industry have had their profits disseminated - more than disseminated, I would say over the last few years; the reason for that is not because people are suddenly watching pornography, it's because they're watching it free on the internet with no restriction. And as technology develops and we have internet protocol television, young people will be able to watch it not just in their rooms but anywhere. That fundamentally is a part of my concern and changes the nature of pornography and the ease of accessibility. The fact that it also creates a problem for the respectable porn industry, in my view, is an opportunity. So if you find a way to restrict access to free and unregulated pornography, I think that will then put back responsibility onto the porn industry which is what I proposed when I suggested that there should be some way in which the porn industry...There's a quid pro quo here I think, if you protect legitimate and legal pornographers, you will enable them to increase their profits again and then I think it's reasonable to say, "what we expect from alcohol and gambling, you now make a contribution precisely to that education that we need to make in order to help young people deal with the overall context in which they're watching porn."

Claire Perry: I'm going to run the session till ten past because we had the vote. I'm sorry, I'm just going to move onto the last question by Fiona Mactaggart MP.

Fiona Mactaggart: I'm sorry that I was late, I was thinking while listening to you

about whether any of you have evidence that the violence which is inherent in much of this pornography is affecting children's behaviour?

Will Gardner: I can't answer this from evidence we have in schools. We do know that some older children are distressed by pornography and that it is around. So from our experience, it's anecdotal evidence that we have. But I just very quickly want to say something on the previous question if I can, ten years ago, or less than that, we asked the industry about whose responsibility it was and they said parents and we asked parents and they said the industry and I think we recognise that it's a multi-stakeholder approach and I think education is key in that. I do see the big ISPs talking to each other and developing systems there and I just want to encourage that process to continue and I just want to encourage something that's going to be consistent and something that makes it easier for us to explain to parents what is happening and I wish that they would then work together to advertise it, take out pages in the newspaper and say "look this is available and free, free is an important part of this, and go and use it". To get this collaboration beyond competition, I think that would be a really important thing in engaging parental peers.

Claire Perry: On Fiona's point about violence...

Jerry Barnett: I've been in the industry for twenty plus years before the web came on, but there was a kind of wild west time in the late 90s after the web turned up, where anything went and that really seems to have faded into the past. It's very difficult to find truly violent pornographic material on in the internet now as opposed to what you would have

found ten years ago. That is primarily because every jurisdiction is setting its own rules locally and places where it was acceptable like Japan, it's no longer acceptable so it's actually a pretty rare problem its actually very hard to find it compared to what it was a few years ago.

Claire Perry: Jacqui.

Jacqui Smith: The BBFC did point out to me however, when I was talking to them, I think it was 25% of the films that they classify R18 they have had to ask for cuts that are almost always related to things that are too violent, even for an R18.

Claire Perry: Thank you so much for your time. No one likes to talk about these perennial problems, but the more we can get facts and figures and information, it is so helpful to the debate, so if I can thank our first Panel very much. If anyone wants to take a comfort break then we can get the new Panel in. Thanks.

ORAL EVIDENCE SESSION TWO

Claire Perry: Can I get started if possible? Thank you again. For the second panel, we have got Sonia Livingstone of the LSE, who has recently published I think probably the most quantitatively substantial piece of research on children's usage of the internet, which is certainly a missing link in a lot of the debates. We've got Donald Findlater from Lucy Faithfull Foundation, who support victims and also potential perpetrators of various abusive situations. We have Fleur Dorrell from the Mothers' Union, very nice to see you, and of course the Bailey Review sponsored by the Mothers' Union has been a very important piece of analysis and serious recommendations, and the report is being reviewed by the Prime

Minister in mid-October to see what progress is being made. Lucie Russell, hopefully she's joining us, she's not already here, from YoungMinds, who is very much focused on the mental health and wellbeing of young people. We have Tink Palmer of the Marie Collins Foundation who has come from a background in social work and has worked with many abused children and is involved in many of the online initiatives around child protection and safety. Thank you all so much for joining us. MPs are drifting out and will be drifting back in but we'll just crack on as we did in the first session. Thank you again. Perhaps I can put the same kind of opening exam question. We're just trying to establish whether this is a problem. Are you aware that children are using the internet to access pornography and what needs to be done about that? And secondly is that access creating problems for young people or indeed older people in any way that can be quantified? One of the problems of course is the ethics on running trials to expose young people to these sorts of imagery so we're very much based on case history in many cases. Perhaps, Sonia, if I can bring you in to start, your analysis on those two questions....

Sonia Livingstone: Thank you very much. As you said, the survey we'd done last year was 25,000 children in 25 European countries, the children were aged 9 to 16 and there is, as I expect you have discovered, a dearth of research on younger children than that. And if I look at just the UK findings which was around a sample of 1000 British 9 to 16 year olds, I think the figures are probably smaller than many people have expected and we can speculate about why that was. 24% had said that they had seen pornography, and in fact 16% said they had seen it on

television, DVDs, and other sources, and 11 % said they had seen it on the internet. And we defined it for them as material that was obviously sexual, naked people and people having sex, those were the exact words, we didn't give the children the word "pornography". The figures then break down: the figures are higher for teenagers than they are for younger children and they are higher for boys than they are for girls. They are higher for seeing nudity than they are for seeing penetrative sex or violent sex and some of the other things, so under 2% see violent sex on the internet. A similar number of children are passing sexual messages of different kinds, some of them including images, some of them just circled usually among friends. As Will mentioned earlier, one of the striking findings was that most of the teenagers when they see pornography say that it's fine and more of the younger children say that they were upset by this. It does raise some questions about whether children are able to know the impacts that such content might have on them. Two-thirds of parents were not aware or not sure in the cases where children had seen pornography on the internet, which very clearly pinpoints the need for basic private awareness and encouraging conversations between parents and children. So the bigger question you ask which is about whether this is a problem or whether this is making things worse, is very difficult to answer because we don't know what children were doing or seeing before. I think it's fairly clear that the internet has added a new way in which pornography is available that didn't exist before so we can imagine much greater availability and privacy of access and so forth. Somebody said earlier and I think it's right, we have no evidence of increased sexual activity among children and we have no evidence that I'm aware of that children's entry into

sexual activity is more problematic than it ever was.

Claire Perry: Thank you very much. Donald, you did a lot of work with victims. Would you like to comment on that?

Donald Findlater: Actually maybe I could explain first about the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. We primarily work with sex offenders, adult, male, female, young people with sexually odd behaviours. I manage a prevention program called "Stop It Now!" where we go into schools as one piece of activity and engage with parents and with people about online behaviour and online risks. One of the recent developments in terms of "do they see it?" -and we get involved in schools and talking to children - I can't comment on statistics but children can confirm that certainly many of them are seeing it. It is an enormous anxiety of many of the parents who come into parent sessions, the tragedy often in the parents session is that 10% of them are there and they say "where are the other 90% of the parents? Do they not know? Are they not worried? If I sort my whole household out, are the other households going to have as much of a problem that I'm trying to cover for my own children and my own household?" One of the developments though over the last four or five years is responding to adult males involved in accessing child pornography and what has been intriguing in engaging with that population, normally at the behest of police forces across the country, is the significant proportion - this is not excusing their behaviour for one second - who progress from viewing online mainstream adult pornography to viewing child pornography. So they are very clear about a trajectory they followed because of the facilities that the internet offers and the secrecy and privacy and the ready

access. We have now had to develop those programmes to younger people because there are younger people engaging in similar material. So police are attempting not to criminalise but also very concerned about what some people... I'm not suggesting that it's a large percentage of all young people, but it is certainly a number and that number is certainly in the network trying to work with the police responding to a number of such young people to do with child pornography and sexting, the sharing of their own images with each other. And then the suggestion, not from our research but from the research you read is it's 10-12% of young teenagers involved in sharing intimate images of themselves. Schools are desperately concerned about that nature of that behaviour and how they can respond and get the parents to be interested. They're struggling in many circumstances to get large numbers of parents to respond so their children are in some order accessing material, I can't say it's uniformly for all of them a problem, but I think for some of them it's distinctly a problem and will contribute to difficulties both in their own future sexual behaviour and also their illegal kind of status that will actually have an impact in their long-term family life and certainly careers eventually.

Claire Perry: Thank you. Tink, you have experience of this as well?

Tink Palmer: I'm sort of the other side of the coin to Donald. But Donald and I are very close colleagues because we have to learn from one another and children obviously tell us a lot about how they behave. I've worked with children and young people who have been sexually abused for about twenty-five years. And so, have things changed in my line of work? Well, yes they have and I thought it

might be helpful to explain how the last eleven years since 1999 when I received my first case for a child being made the subject of abusive images online, and I can remember thinking “my goodness, I don’t understand how this technology works what on earth am I going to do” and then of course I thought what we’ve got is a new conduit and people’s behaviour doesn’t change, I have to learn how to use this conduit. So the second question is, “is that going to influence the impact on the children and what happens to them?” And in fact we found that it does so what we need to do is look at a differential response to children who have been abused online. So that’s the first kind of starter. So when we come to pornography what I’ve done is try to highlight about three themes that have come out. Firstly, one of my worries is that people tend to think of boys when it comes to seeing adult pornography, increasingly girls have been referred to me. So over a ten year period, in the early years I had no girls referred whatsoever, whereas now a quarter of them are girls. What I’ve learnt to do in the last two years is ask the question of were you ever having access to adult pornography and what I found is they often say yes which goes back to Donald’s point. In a number of my cases, the young people were encouraged to look at adult pornography by their groomer to desensitise them to preference, sexual arousal and then led onto looking at abusive photos of children, and if they were boys they were encouraged to masturbate to these images, etc. So pornography can act and may act as a vehicle for perpetrators who wish to harm children online to encourage them to enter into that sort of fantasy and then often meet them offline for the perpetrator to be gratified with their sexual preference. So we have to have a look at what’s happening there. The other

tragic cases I’m dealing with now are about the family situation. There’s two very brief ones I want to give you because I don’t want to take up too much time, but I think it’s important to understand what’s happening in families particularly young families. There’s one of a university couple, both aged 21, both bright, both just got their degree and had a 4 month old baby between them; and this very gentle man, the partner, would change personality absolutely when he wanted to have sexual relations with his wife and the whole relationship ended. And after a lot of digging and investigating and working with each partner separately, it transpired that his demands were so excessive that the wife was not able to manage this anymore and when we actually looked at his background to help him speak about his past we found he had been masturbating to adult pornography from the age of 12, a very shy, gentle person, who couldn’t communicate well with his peer group. The family was extremely, comfortably well off. His dad was a bank manager, and money wasn’t a problem so it was very useful to use the computer as a babysitter and the parents didn’t worry about this child basically. So he had no idea of how to manage and cope with the context of intimacy. There are so many other examples but those are the principle things about how it’s impacting in our clinical work.

Claire Perry: Fleur.

Fleur Dorrell: We did quite a lot of research but nothing like the extent of some but our findings are relatively like yours when we’re looking at children and parents and how they’re accessing porn on the internet. But one of the other things our charity does is marriage preparation and relationship support and supporting relationship breakdown so we

have different annuals on different stages of relationships. But one of the things we were concerned about with the difference between young children being affected by the porn and teenagers was that while teenagers who often said that they weren't bothered or it didn't concern them. We weren't sure if they were immune to it because they had spent a longer time looking at it whereas the younger children hadn't. So we are concerned about the immunisation and seeing porn in the wider sexualised society. So while we're looking today at porn online, we in the Mothers' Union are very concerned about the over-sexualisation of society and how porn translates itself into mainstream advertising, the news industry, media, and a whole other array of avenues. So porn is actually much broader than just the internet idea of it. The immunisation of teenagers is a particular concern because while we don't have enough research to see how it might affect them later on, we do have research on the other end and its effect on relationships, marriage breakdown, and where porn is becoming increasingly used among teens. From our point of view and certainly the clergy we work with throughout the country, that has become an increasing issue among relationship breakdown in a way that it wasn't thirty years ago. So, two ends of the spectrum...

Claire Perry: Lucie, to bring you in, particularly on the harmful effects, given the focus of your charity.

Lucie Russell: I was just going to start with some more figures very very quickly. Somebody mentioned in the last session about a survey in Psychologies Magazine which was last year and they found that one third of 10 year olds had seen internet porn and 81% of children aged 14-16 look

at it at home. So those figures are much bigger. Also, there was a poll last year that showed 93% of women and 73% of men felt that viewing pornography online is damaging to their children. Also, a Channel Four survey last year showed that 6 out of 10 teenagers say porn has influenced their lives. Those are interesting figures. In terms of the effects, sexual exposure to sex happens during appropriate periods of child development and children don't really have a natural sexual capacity for that at about 10 or 11 and what porn does is that it short circuits the normal personality development process and provides misinformation about sexual gravity and can be very disturbing for them and also their sense of self and their sense of their body. So they introduce children to sexual sensations that they aren't mentally ready for and it can be very confusing and especially with girls it has a very profound effect on their sense of self-image and also just generally what is normal and what's not. So I think that's the thing in terms of childhood development, it is damaging because it is happening too early which it is because online porn is so much more available. I also want to say about the filters, I have tried to put filters on at home, if you have a household computer and you put the parental controls on, it means anything that to do with sex, drugs, violence will be off there so parents don't want to do that – we didn't want to do that in our house. If you don't put parental controls on, then everything is available. You can put parental controls on search engines like Google as we did, but then we realised there's a lot of other search engines and the kids are really savvy, so we put parental controls on every single search engine. Also, I don't know if you know about iPods, my son had got an iPod Touch and it is impossible to put the filters on that iPod Touch, and I'm actually

going to have to go to the Apple shop and ask them how to do it. So this thing about it being easy, it's not easy. I'm not that prehistoric and I found it very difficult and I know this is not about this but TV on Sky packages and Virgin packages, there's lots of pornography channels and it is so hard to get them off the TV. I've been trying for weeks and I've been talking to Virgin for help on how to do it. So I think that this idea that it's very easy to get the controls is not true. Also, the other thing I want to say is that the question was asked before about the issue of violence you were asking Fiona, there seems to be quite a strong link between gang mentality and what's happening to the girls that are in the gangs and...a study on this found that initiation into gangs, the way that girls are initiated, there's a lot of violent sexual practice that is coming from - it could not come from anywhere other than - pornography, it is very disturbing what is going on. Often these girls are very needy and very vulnerable anyway.

Claire Perry: Open up to colleagues questions. Andrea..

Andrea Leadsom: Yes, thanks very much. I'd like to go back again to the idea of younger children versus older children. The last panel said there was far larger numbers of older children that were watching porn but it was less of an issue for younger children. I don't feel that we quite bottomed it out. Because there is slightly a separate debate about sex and relationship education in schools and how young children should be given that. Certainly, the chap that came from a pornography company said that the porn industry does not want to be responsible for the children's sex education. So at what point - and you've just said that children don't have natural sexual understanding until at least the age of 10 -

so what is that transition, it's still not clear to me, because we are talking about post-pubescent children who clearly have the appetite to look for porn if it's easily available to them. But what about the pre-pubescent children who have no understanding of it, and maybe it's a small number but what is happening in that group and how is sex education in schools going to prepare or protect them from what they see online? And I'd like to share something, I have three kids and my youngest son actually saw a very horrible, but completely non-graphic rape scene in that film, *Georgiana*, where the Duke of Devonshire rapes his wife; he was traumatised by that and it wasn't at all explicit. He was 9 at the time and he's still traumatised by that. Very interestingly but anecdotally, he won't watch the movie again because of that scene. It does concern me that young children, albeit a small number, are actually accessing porn. But I am concerned that things have changed and there's so much more ability to see it.

Claire Perry: Who would like to start off with that? Tink?

Tink Palmer: I'll have a go. Going back to your description about your son, he obviously has a safe relationship with you, because I presume he was able to tell you. I think that might be where we're going to go here. It's about "do we want to be able to take in children as young as 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, on these issues or do we want the education of parents and teachers and people around the child about the safety issues?" I only have had two children in my clinical work who as a presenting problem were traumatised through seeing material totally unsuitable for them, as it turned out there had been sexual abuse within the families as well. But what I do know is when we're trying to determine

how do we work out the vulnerability of children, which is an ongoing debate and a very interesting one, from clinical experience, I have to say I want more detailed information – 12 seems a crucial age. All of the twenty-three young women I worked with that were groomed online, often with pornography being used, it started when they were about 11 and three quarters to 12 and a half, that's not when it was reported, that's when it started. That cusp of coming into adolescence is absolutely crucial. But I think the other thing we need to bear in mind is that we have to understand our new scientific understanding of brain development and adolescence is a key age for that and that if we don't get ourselves in there now and help to save children from going through these experiences there is a possibility, not with all children, but there is a possibility that they will not end up with a good and healthy way of looking at life.

Lucie Russell: Things that are disturbing for children at a young age; the brain becomes hardwired and neuroscience proves this. It actually changes if kids have traumatic experiences at an early age. It was mentioned in the last session, if you do type in porn onto Google and you haven't got filters when the sites come up, the previews are really explicit, they don't ask you if you're 18 and they don't charge you. So that's something that maybe we can do something about, why is that available for young children to see?

Claire Perry: We had really interesting evidence from a chap who runs an online pornographic video on-demand company and he said that the porn industry has been decimated by free content but I suspect that the free content provided by the pornography companies has got more explicit almost as a way of competing. I

don't know, I have no evidence to support, but it's a very interesting point. Donald.

Donald Findlater: Yes, I mean just to pick up the response that I hope starts to address it. There's a European project that we're involved in, it's about relationships and sex education starting with 9 year olds partly because of the environment we live in and the things that are assaulting children at the moment. It's trying to ensure that there's information embedded with children at that age before they're exposed to some of the more graphic images that might be troublesome to them. But critically, the program involves engaging parents as part of the program so that there's a dialogue between the school and the parents, having the parents and children involved in the content. It's about respect, body safety, the role of celebrating sex without being too explicit about it and taking the taboo issues away from it because families do struggle to talk about sex with their children. We were put in the situation thinking what it would be like watching a pornographic movie with our parents or indeed with our children. And as a parent of five children, I would be off making the tea probably. So I just think trying to do something that has a more healthy adult response and a shared response between schools, parents and children is an important way to go. The trouble will be of course that some parents won't be involved, won't sign up, and there will always be that shortfall for some children. And sometimes that's about a language issue much as other things as well as cultural issues that might be an obstacle. So I think because we know that young children, without the faculty to understand things and talk about it, when things distressed them, this is going to become more troublesome in likelihood.

Fleur Dorrell: I would agree with that but I would also say as well as addressing the issue from when they're 9, we need to be critically thinking about what information we are giving. The Mothers' Union is very concerned that a lot of sex education is purely factual and one of the things about the porn industry is that the sexual acts that you see is away from any sort of meaningful relationship or values. So if we can encourage that the education be given in the context of a relationship that is loving and has equality which is an essential.... Often in pornography, the research shows that women are hypersexualised and objectified far more than men so there's a gender disparity in how they're portrayed and therefore in how the genders are expected to react to each other. And so that inequality is a critical issue when they get older and when they become adults. So I think if we can give children something to compare with what they are looking at online, that actually is much more meaningful and sex is seen in a mature and respectful and loving way and then when they are looking at porn online which is not like that they actually have something to compare it with. Whereas at the moment that is what they get and they may see their parents in a loving relationship, or their parents may be divorced or separated, so again there is a disparity often in their home life to what they are seeing online and that will give them something of a benchmark against.

Andrew Selous: I'm very interested in any solutions or ideas. We've identified this as a very serious problem. I'm going to come back to something Fleur said earlier which was about Sky and Virgin I would also to also say Freeview, which has a couple of those channels on there. I just want to say to Claire that what we're proposing to do with the internet, we

could equally do with these packages and have an opt-in, because children can just as easily sneak in and get these on the channels.

Lucie Russell: From ten o'clock at night they have free previews and they are very explicit and unless you're in the room with them from ten o'clock at night monitoring what they're doing, and some of them have TVs in their rooms. The packages, the adults channels should come blocked. I don't understand what they are all doing there.

Andrew Selous: You could have the same opt in system that you have with Sky. So the standard package doesn't have it, if you want it you can say yes I would like to have it on options then you avoid the censorship rows, because you are not stopping it, but the default position is that it's not there.

Lucie Russell: Can I just add to that. If you want to take them off you have to use a PIN number and if your kids might be watching on demand or catch up TV they are using the same PIN number. So I said to Virgin could I have a different PIN number then? So they can't change what I've done by using the same PIN. They said no, only one PIN number.

Claire Perry: Sonia you wanted to come in on this.

Sonia Livingstone: I just wanted to say the paradox that if we want a system that stops everyone getting it, then we could do something on the ISP level that could be simple but could encourage people to understand it. But if we want a system that is nuanced where you have different pin numbers for the TV, computer, or whatever, then we enter these complex systems that most people cannot

understand. It's very hard to have a system that's nuanced to the different needs of the people or technologies in the household that is feasible. It is clearly quite evident in a media challenged industry.

Claire Perry: The innovation discussion about TV is you're absolutely right that we have Freeview channels after ten o'clock. But we have a reasonably robust Ofcom series of guidelines as to what can and can't be shown before the watershed which people have accepted quite happily for years. The same with our film broadcasting. It just seems that the internet is treated rather different.

Lucie Russell: I think what we need to do is make it easier to understand how to put the filters on, it is not easy, and you can't find the information, they say go to the website and you scramble around the website and can't find where it is. Make it really obvious when you set up the computer, put it in people's faces, because parents do want to block inappropriate content. Why should we spend hours trying to do that?

Claire Perry: Andrea, you wanted to comment.

Andrea Leadsom: In terms of solutions, what I had with my kids over the summer, now that we don't just have .com or .org, we have .xxx for porn, you can just say block .xxx unless I put in this pin. That could be a way of doing it, I just think there's just no shortage of technical solutions to the problem, it's just a case of what's the right one and obviously everybody wants to avoid any sense of censorship, it just seems to me that we need to do something.

Claire Perry: While I've got Tink on the floor, one of the questions I think would be interesting in understanding is these children who are potentially particularly vulnerable to this, because often we sit and think about our children and our family relationships - and hopefully we have all done the right thing and installed these filters even though they are very difficult - but of course those are not necessarily the children who are perhaps most at risk...whether you could comment on that?

Tink Palmer: Twenty-four women I worked with were sexually abused in one way or another or groomed online and I thought this is quite a cohort I really need to look at a characteristic. Well over half of those young women are middle class living in what seems to be very comfortable homes which doesn't mean that they are being abused or anything. They have gone online and the biggest problem would be their need to identify and get caught up in the chat online and before they know where they are, they are either being groomed or they don't realise they are being groomed they think it's just a guy, the love of their life. So I'm not saying every case, is the classic potential child who perhaps hasn't had all the opportunities in life or from the other side of the economic spectrum or class. We've got to be careful before saying who's vulnerable; it's not as simple as that.

Sonia Livingstone: Just going back to the teenagers in the sense that there's normalisation in the sexual practices among teenagers, it seems to me to be very strong in those families of the children who have parents who want to say 'I trust my child. I don't want to infringe their privacy', and so they say, 'I don't want to break that relationship'.

That does often mean that the girl is left considering certain peer pressures.

Claire Perry: Julian, you wanted to comment

Julian Brazier: Yes, I'm sorry I was absurdly late coming in the end here. I just want to pursue for the moment, the theme the two of you were touching on a few minutes ago, which is the idea of producing additional role models or ideas, trying to work from the other end of trying to get positive messages around love and the purposes of sex rather the exploitation of porn media. Actually, I want to ask you a controversial question, we don't have a teacher here, but I'd like to ask you a question about schools. One of the things that changed under the last government was the end to the practice whereby schools could entirely set an ethos on their own. For example, in Catholic tradition which I grew up in, if a teacher was not adhering to traditional Catholic principles in their private life, they would be expected to leave the school. The growth of free schools means now, in principle, that now we have concerned groups, not just religious groups, trying to create new exciting adventures in education and some of these groups must be interested in the wider social and emotional health of the children. What I really want to ask was, do you think that there is a case, which some people may see as very Victorian about going back to a situation where schools were allowed to set conditions for their staff and make them a condition under employment under the holding of a particular ethos in a very determined way was allowed again?

Claire Perry: I think... Fleur.

Fleur Dorrell: I think that would still set up a situation where if the school had a particular ethos and the Mothers' Union has had a lot of experience with grandparents who disagree with the parents on how they are bring up the children, the grandchildren. So if the school says one thing and the family home says another, you will get a contradiction in what is carried out in reality. So I think what would be more useful is something more holistic or a bottom line between the media, industry, government, schools, the home, and if there are certain common denominators that we can all agree on that wherever you are or whatever class you are would be actually more powerful, because what we have right now is a disparity in values and views around how we deal with this issue. I think that the school ethos may actually make it harder for other people when the rest of their life is not aligned with that particular ethos.

Donald Findlater: It's interesting, I do agree with a lot of work with safeguarding within schools and one of the strong messages within that were - which actually was driven by the previous government and DoF - was all about codes of conduct and some values that informed those about attitudes towards and respecting children - and I think there's some underpinning things that should be universal and explicit and should be not only expected of the staff and school but also shared with and signed up to by the parents. I think there is something that could be achieved but it's a matter of being very transparent. I'd be cautious about going to some places. Some basic standards about how we treat each others as human beings and how we should regard children and the issue of the context of sexual relationships seems healthier, expressing views about those things should be shared and owned up to,

it ought to be a very appropriate thing to do. But can I revert to...and talk about solutions. I remember the taskforce on internet safety in 2004-5 about children being safe online, were saying that it's the parent's responsibility. We are still saying it and it's still a problem and I do wish that parents will say in internet safety seminars some parents didn't ask for the pornography to come in. Some of them sadly were oblivious to the fact that it was because they were technically not equipped to understand it, their children were. If parents aren't exercising that choice, I'd rather it was a choice or opt-in rather than being oblivious to it, and working with Somali communities and others at the moment, the parents in these communities don't feel competent in some fields but their children are. But the issues of sex and sexuality are not issues that they are comfortable to talk about and parents may not be aware of what their children have access to, and I think parents should exercise a choice about what is coming into their home.

Sonia Livingstone: I wanted to address something which has bubbled up several times in this discussion. If pornography is often the portrayal of casualised sex or coercive sex or problematic sex in some kind of way, of course we would like ideal sex as a respectful activity within a loving relationship. I just can't square that opposition with what I see 11, 12 and 13 year olds doing. We don't want our 11-13 year olds in a loving relationship having sex. It's not that we're trying to promote that ideal for them. What we need is to find a way to understand that they will be interested, curious, experimenting, and exploring and find a way that they can do that with some kinds of material critical repertoire to understand that some ways of undergoing that experimentation are safer or more respectful or can be limited

in various ways because...why are they turning to pornography? Somehow this is filling a gap because we've driven this conversation about sex underground and if we keep saying no, sex happens in a loving relationship, we are telling them that they have to wait until they are 30. To a 12 year old who is curious, a loving relationship is a very far way away and if we were to talk about sex we have to recognise their interests and their needs in a way that is not just through images which are underground and are often too casualised.

Claire Perry: I might just get Fiona's next question on the table.

Fiona Mactaggart: I keep thinking about when I was a primary teacher teaching 10 year olds, twenty years ago and the thing that really shocked me then wasn't that the children who I was teaching had much access to pornography I wasn't aware of that, but I was aware of them watching horrifically violent films in loving homes. I can think of one child, very vividly, who wrote something that truly shocked me, which made it very clear that she had watched a really violent horror film the night before and there would have been other children in the class that I would have expected that to be part of their experience but she wasn't one of them. Maybe were not actually helping parents enough to know what seeing these things can do to these children, because parents are often sheepish and scared about talking to their children about relationships and sex. I have a feeling that there's a big gap here about helping families to do this well. Helping families give children ways of saying actually I don't want to see that, etc... some of it is kind of practising bits of language and habits, together. I was wondering if any of you have any examples of ways in that we

can help families make their young people more robust.

Lucie Russell: I think there's a dearth of research and with violent films, there's results that say its damaging and others that says it's not. I think parents think, "oh it'll be okay". I don't think we have enough information, I think that's one problem and so maybe more research...but then with pornography it's so difficult because of the ethical issues around doing and controlling comparisons. I don't think parents know what to do, what's okay and what isn't. There are also all the Xbox programmes, some of which are extremely violent. We don't know what this is all doing to children; what we do know is that the access is a lot easier. I think the question about PHSE, I think I remember that the PHSE is not compulsory anymore and also lots of wellbeing indicators are being taken out of the OFSTED inspections, and I think that is one area where this group could be making inquiries about, because maybe OFSTED could be, in terms of having all the schools doing similar things, that they could have a role in that. I think you need to be saying something to the inquiry what is going on about the PHSE at the moment as well and about what should be being taught, and if it is not compulsory that is not good anyway.

Sonia Livingstone: Could I just add to that, the other thing which is not compulsory in schools and yet it seems that schools are very well placed to teach is something that we can call it internet literacy or media literacy or whatever...these are all images, these are all representation of the world of what everyone does supposedly, of what is normal. There are lots of curricular materials that teachers can use to get children to see these are stereotypes,

these are too mainstream, there are other ways of living, other ways of thinking why people are trying to put particular images...There's a repertoire of ideas that says these are persuasive images and messages and you do not have to fall for them.

Donald Findlater: Maybe we can give that; the programme, what I was thinking about is how do parents and children have some kind of meaningful interaction and I think that the programme we indicated that is Europe-wide and is being developed, though we will see how it goes, it is called "Hedgehogs" it is about being close enough without hurting each other, essentially, but I think that is to try to provoke conversation and it is to try to also get parents to have conversations with each other too about shared concerns and I think that is the method that I think will hopefully will grow if the schools are confident and see the need to actually engage with their parents around these issues and facilitate parents to start the conversation with each other and then with their children and to give them some tools and some questions, some words to speak, a way of practising, or learning how someone else has done that and pass it on, so I do think there are some facilities for doing that and various people here have websites, we have a website called "Parents Protect!" which is trying to help people have some of those conversations.

Fleur Dorrell: The Mothers' Union at the moment is writing a very simple source for parents to help them be more in tune and aware and also to spend more time engaging with their children and it is an incredibly simple one as we know parents don't have much time. It is like an A5 booklet we're just writing at the moment but we hope that will at least be one small thing that is very accessible for parents,

using easy language that does cover a lot of these issues but communication comes through it very very powerfully because that is the key to having that relationship with your child.

But the problem we keep encountering is that so many parents are working so hard and such long hours that actually the time they have with their children to explore whether the film they are watching is too violent is so minimal and the time they do spend often they want to be doing other things with them rather than having these in depth, detailed conversations about porn or violence. So that is another problem we need be thinking about: the time we actually spend, should that be so devoted to this even though that has become a big issue as well.

Tink Palmer: I think we need to think about timing and when does this begin? I think this begins pre-birth and I think it is about the whole way through getting the right approach about how you talk to the child, different stages of how we communicate with your child and then how you form relationships. So that's just one thing. The other point is to say - and I think that a lot of us have recognised it - the internet and the mobile technologies have a unique impact on people's behaviours, not just on children, I have friends whose behaviour online is just like "what did just you do, what did you say?" So I think inhibitions do disappear and very much so at times. But what happens is that young people tell me, when they have been referred to me, because - by the way none of those twenty four girls made a disclosure - it was either the police through forensic examination, or computers trace or some other discovery. And they said they would never ever have told anybody, their closest friends, their

mum and dad, what they have been doing online.

So many many children will be at this moment in time chatting online getting in positions where they are feeling very uncomfortable but they are not going to tell you because they feel they are evidenced within their computers and folders. So I think when we are going to give messages and we must give messages - that has to be part of the whole support idea, education etc - we have to be very careful about how it works. In order to be able to capture young people's attention we should look at how we communicate with them and help them actually relax and be able to talk.

Claire Perry: Let's make Mark's the last question.

Mark Garnier: I think...quite a developed point and I think both Donald and Tink in particular would like to think about what I am going say: If you look back twenty, thirty, forty years, there was a great censor that was out there which was just one's natural embarrassment, you would not necessarily just go into the shop and go and buy pornography or whatever in a sex shop in Soho, and that basically prevented a huge number of people from ...you couldn't get hold of it. This great argument is actually about this fundamental change in the Communications Age where that element of censorship has now gone so you can get whatever you want without any embarrassment at all. The many laws we have surrounding pornography and all the rest of it, were written at a time when we had this natural censorship, I am thinking in particular of the 18 cut-off and then you would go off and if you finally plucked up the courage to buy something it would be as harmless, although not as harmless as

today, as a Penthouse. Now, you gave a situation where absolutely anything at all is freely available with no sense of self restraint, you can hide inside this world of the internet on your desk and you can have a look at anything you like without anybody checking at all. My question is twofold: are the laws that we are trying to use to control this just too outdated for the modern world? Do we have to completely rethink the laws in terms of what content is and all the rest of it?

The second thing is: are we missing the point? That actually there was a time when we decided that 17 years and 364 days was unacceptable and 18 was acceptable to look at this stuff, actually is that now outdated as well? Are we now seeing the types of pornography being available actually pretty affordable, so appalling that actually perhaps we would think about raising the limit of when we should be looking at porn; in the same way the Americans, for example, use 21 as the age at which they buy alcohol. Should we be thinking about that? Are we just not addressing the fundamental problem before we start thinking about how we stop people accessing it?

Claire Perry: - So: laws out of date and porn access age somehow should be changed... Should we just go down the Panel for a quick answer on these points, Sonia?

Sonia Livingstone: Tricky questions, there's no evidence that there is any difference between an 18 year old seeing porn and a 35 year old and a 75 year old, it would very hard for any kind of line if you are going to say this is in some way really damaging. Then I would be thinking about enforcing the R18 more across the board rather than introducing new kind of age barriers.

Whether the laws are out of date, I think the difficulty is maybe the laws are not applied and the codes of practice are not applied across the media so I think people are reasonably happy with what is going on with television and DVDs and so forth.

Though I would remind you that more children in Britain see pornography through television and DVDs than they said they had over the internet, I'm sure this is going to change but nonetheless I think people are more happy because they understand the system.

Mark Garnier: The BBC had some programme some years ago about the Roman Empire, frankly I remember watching this and thinking the first ten minutes between nine o'clock and ten past nine of this were just pure pornography, I am no prude but I was stunned by this. Now that would not have happened many years ago.

Claire Perry: Any other thought about changing the laws? Are our laws out of date?

Donald Findlater: We know the law catches up with things, we know that very recently that extreme and violent pornography has been made illegal, non-photographic depiction have been made illegal which were previously legal so I think there have been some shifts.

Following Sonia's line, I am not convinced that if you are 18, 21 or 31 that there is any material difference so I guess I am not an advocate of using the criminal law for what is predominantly a social ill. I think the debate about it, the education, the tools to be able to control it and to make choices, I think those are really important things that we should have first.

Lucie Russell: I don't think it's about laws I think it's about access but I think the other thing we do need to look at is music videos because if any of you have watched music videos, some of them are so explicit and the messages are very damaging and kids across the board are watching these videos.

Claire Perry: Thank you so much for coming and giving evidence, it's much appreciated and we will have a second session on 18th October with the ISPs and some of the other people in the internet space. Thank you so much.

Formal Evidence Sessions

House of Commons

Parliamentary Inquiry into Online Child Protection

Oral Evidence Sessions Three & Four

Committee Room 8

Tuesday 18th October

ORAL EVIDENCE SESSION THREE

Claire Perry: I've always wanted to say this so I'm going to do the order, order thing. Thank you so much, it's a fantastic group of people that we've got here listening and presenting today, we are all really grateful. This being Parliament you will have a series of MPs, Lords and Ladies drifting in and out during the course of the next two hours but we will try and keep moving along to order. If I can start off with our first witnesses today. Just to go back to the last session, that was the session where we investigated the question of harm; is the access to different sorts of content a problem? what did different organisations think about that? This session is about continuing that discussion and also to investigate what some of the players are actually doing about it. Our first two witnesses very interestingly are Andy Phippen, who

represents the Open Rights Group. Thank you Professor Phippen, I think it's really really important to hear what your group and your views are on this, because this is often a very very important debate which is overlooked. Secondly, we have John Carr who chairs the UK's Children's Charities' Coalition on Internet Safety. So if I can turn over to one of my colleagues to kick off please, Peter.

Peter Aldous: Yes, thank you very much Madam Chairman. Good afternoon Mr Carr, if I can direct the first question to yourself. What did you make of last week's announcement on Active Choice by the country's leading Internet Service Providers.

John Carr: I was actually completely astonished by what I read in the newspapers. I actually was in Copenhagen at a conference, I wasn't here thankfully to deal with all the press calls I got to my mobile phone. As far as I could see, every newspaper reported it incorrectly and when every newspaper reports something incorrectly, it probably isn't the journalists that have got it wrong, it's probably whoever did the briefing that got it wrong. What the newspapers said – and by the way, what they said is: historically, the position that we have supported was that pornography would not be available in the UK from the big four ISPs by default. In other words, absent of doing anything else you simply wouldn't be able to access legal adult pornography. That has never been the proposal that has been on the table. The proposal that Reg Bailey made in his excellent report was simply - and by the way remember we supported the position that I just outlined - what Reg Bailey said was that parents should be required to make an active choice as to whether or

not they wanted to turn on the porn filters. Now, somehow in the briefing machines or in the discussions with journalists that point got completely lost. There is not, or never has been, a proposal which this Government or Reg Bailey have endorsed which suggests that porn should be blocked by default. TalkTalk have already implemented a solution at network level. It's excellent, they deserve a great deal of applause for what they have done, and they have definitely moved the debate forward. It isn't strictly speaking, however, compliant with what Reg Bailey said because there isn't an unavoidable screen that pops up at the moment with what TalkTalk is offering. They are working on it, they are going to do it but it's not yet in place. The other three have all said that is what they intend to do. Whether they intend to do it a network level or router or exactly how they are going to do it we don't yet know but they are working on it. Reg Bailey gave them until October next year to complete it and I think that's a very lethargic, not a very ambitious deadline and I think we will see the big three doing more before then but I hope that answers your question.

Andrew Selous: Can I ask you Professor Phippen what your views are about the effect of watching pornography, what the effect is that on children and also what effect you think it has on marriages and other relationships?

Andy Phippen: It's a hugely complicated question; clearly children seeing pornography is harmful. We have dialogue with children a lot of the time where you have overt sexualisation in young children. If you were to take an example from the media, the character of Jay in the "Inbetweeners" is not a caricature. There are plenty of people who talk overtly

about sexual practices; their views of extreme sexual practices are normally a subset. In terms of the adult population it's far more complicated. I am aware of happy married couples who happily engage with pornography and don't have any problems with that at all. I did have a student do a small study last year interestingly bringing up the fact that the proportion of women who were actively engaging with the use of pornography was as high as the proportion of men which did go against a lot of the conjecture around the fact that men think pornography is good and women think it's the objectification of gender. So, it was an interesting piece of data to see and we're currently doing a piece of work with older teens and people in their twenties, which is alongside the BBC which shows that a lot of people are actively engaging with the use of technology in their relationships in a healthy and positive way. So I think it's dangerous to say that pornography equals bad. As far as children are concerned and as far as the engagement of pornography and children, yes clearly it's harmful. I would be amazed to meet anyone that thinks that it's all right for children to see pornography.

David Burrowes: Yes, some of my constituents happen to be members of Open Rights Group and they hate pornography and would be surprised to hear you suggesting the freedom of pornography, more so than the freedom of the rights and the concerns about website filtering. Wouldn't it be the case that you'd be supporting effective filtering that still provided enough freedom of choice for users?

Andy Phippen: Again, filtering so children can't get access to pornography I don't see an issue with that at all.

Filtering by default for an adult who wishes to make the choice whether to see pornography or not is a more interesting debate to be had. If people wish to engage with filtering to make sure they don't come across it then fair enough but are we looking to move to a point where by default adults have to go to their ISP and say "please can I look at pornography". That seems to me to be moving towards private sector censorship, which is probably a dangerous thing to move towards.

David Burrowes: So would you support the rights of parents to be provided with enough tools to be able to make the decision?

Andy Phippen: Oh I do very much support that but I would argue that in a lot of the cases those tools are already available but one of the problems we face in the child internet safety arena is parental engagement and I fear that if they think that their Internet Service Provider is filtering pornography, therefore they don't have to worry about if the kids see it or not, then it's not engaging them in the debate about children having access to harmful content. I think filtering is a very good tool to prevent a lot of that access but it certainly is not a tool that will block all access. There was recently a European Commission report under the child internet safety research agenda, where it clearly stated that filtering wasn't 100% effective and I was phoned up by the New York Times and they said, "it's not effective" and I went, "of course it's not effective" and they went, "wow, isn't it? It's like, well, computers are very good at identifying things at an object based level, if they see a word they know that's a bad word but they are not very good at making inference, so to take a word for

example such as cock. Are we talking about the male member or are we talking about a chicken? Is the computer going to make that judgment? Well, they can make inference based on other words around that piece of content. It was quite amusing over the weekend to see that the Sesame Street Channel on YouTube had been overrun by pornography as well; so if Google with all of their filtering technology can't prevent that sort of thing from happening... I think the danger of filtering being seen as a solution is that parents will disengage with the debate and I think filtering is a very good tool but it is not going to be the solution that prevents the children from accessing this sort of content. Also, I have spoken to both parents and children where they go "well, if my kids see any of this sort of thing then I'll stop them from going online" which is a very dangerous thing to have happen because then the kids aren't going to say "I've come across this by accident, what am I going to do about it?" Parental engagement is really important. Perhaps if you're saying filtering is the way forward and filtering is the only way forward that the engagement will disconnect even further. I know it is difficult for parents and some of these products are complex but I hate to use the very safe analogy, because I don't like it, but a parent would not get into a car not learning how to drive and put their children in the back and go down the street. So why is it that they say "well, this technology stuff I don't really understand, the kids do that so therefore someone else needs to do something else about it?"

Claire Perry: Do you object to the watershed on the BBC?

Andy Phippen: No

Claire Perry: The group doesn't object to existing forms of regulation?

Andy Phippen: I think again it's a way of preventing access to a certain point but does that stop kids seeing violent content and sexual content, no, because there is a parental choice involved in that if you do not send your children to bed.

Claire Perry: Mark.

Mark Garnier: Just a couple of points that John Carr made in your response to Peter about the fact that it should be up to parents to make the choices about whether or not children can or cannot see pornography. Surely, half the problem though is not what you can do or kids can do on your computer home but it is what they can do on the computers at other people's homes. I certainly have those strong feelings about whether my children, all of whom are under the age of ten, can or can't do about pornography but who knows what my neighbours may think, what is your response to that?

John Carr: Get better neighbours! Seriously, this is all incremental. We have to start from where we are and build up from it. Hopefully your neighbours in the end will realise how wise you are and copy what you are doing.

Mark Garnier: The damage will have already been done.

John Carr: Absolutely and I agree very much with what Andy was saying. Nobody's suggesting that even the Bailey Review recommendations, were they to be fully implemented next week, would mean that children would never see pornography again on the internet or anywhere else. But those proposals, if implemented, will substantially reduce

the availability of this material and will make it harder and more difficult for children, inadvertently or otherwise, to be exposed to it. And I do think, in time, if we keep plugging it away like we did with "Clunk Click Every Trip" and Green Cross Code and road safety stuff, eventually, we'll change the culture, we'll change people's perceptions. And so there will be neighbours like this, there will be people who never want to be a part of it, but the majority will sign up because they're good parents who want the best not just for their kids but for everybody else's kids.

Mark Garnier: Why do you think that the Internet Service Providers aren't providing sufficient protection against this thing at the moment? Or do you think it's because we haven't reached that stage of the debate yet?

John Carr: First of all, it really does go against the grain for internet people to...this is not in their DNA, this is not something they grew up with when internet "techies" talk about filtering. The philosophy of the internet was pointing in the exact opposite direction. But the point is, and this is why I'm slightly impatient, the internet isn't what it used to be, it's now a mass consumer product, it's in children's bedrooms. This was not foreseen; nobody planned or foresaw that the internet was going to end up in the bedrooms of 11 year olds. But that's where it is. So the old rules that applied, the old philosophy, the old thinking which I was very much a part of and very much supported, is simply no longer applicable because the internet is now completely different from what it used to be. So it's trying to get people who always thought it that way to see things differently. It's also expensive, it's not cheap, it is difficult but I also have to say the pressure from this Government is making a big difference.

The last government did fantastic work and we are world leaders because of the work that they began but they never pushed hard enough on this particular topic. David Cameron, Claire, you guys, it's quite clear that this is where you want to go and they will respond to that kind of pressure.

Claire Perry: Fiona

Fiona Bruce: Thank you. Good afternoon gentlemen. John, do you think that the proliferation of the internet and the devices in the homes now is posing new problems for parents who want to protect their children?

John Carr: Absolutely, and that's why what TalkTalk has done therefore is really excellent. Because their network-level control is no matter how many devices you have in the home, be it a games console, an iPod, iPad, mobile phone with Wi-Fi connectivity...I saw a video the other night of a fairly typical family from Nottingham, they had 17 devices from which they could connect to the internet and 14 of those connected wirelessly. What TalkTalk have done by putting controls in the network is that all of those devices are caught in the same way. A kid can't go upstairs and get porn on his laptop which they would have been able to do previously. And just on that, there is one gap that needs to be addressed and it's not the responsibility of the ISP providers but Wi-Fi providers outside the home. If you go to hotels or railway stations or lots of shops on the high street, they provide a free Wi-Fi connection. So all mobile phone companies have put a lot of money into putting parental controls onto their networks on their mobile phone. If a kid goes into Starbucks, just to pick a name of a brand, or a railway station and uses their phones to connect

to the Wi-Fi that they've made available free, all those expensive controls are made completely redundant and irrelevant, so we also have to deal with Wi-Fi element of it as well. It goes back to bits of points you were making earlier, Mr Garnier, it's the same kind of thing, even though you can control these things through the ISP connectivity through your home, there's lots of other things that need to be taken care of. I understand that through thanks to Claire's pressure and other forms of pressure that the big Wi-Fi providers are very much aware of the need to act on this although I don't have any notion of the time scale for that.

Andrea Leadsom: Yes thank you you're making a very clear case for the complete 'Wild West' nature of the internet at the moment and it does seem to me that the proliferation of devices means that some sort of internet ISP network level security is the only answer that might potentially solve this once and for all. Would you agree with that or is there another alternative? And secondly, because obviously internet porn is one very key issue but there are others like how to make a bomb and all sorts of other issues; is there a case for some sort of classification as well as, or instead of, as a means to protect children?

John Carr: With the TalkTalk solution, you get nine categories that you can choose to block on your system. The one that most parents are opting for actually is not porn, that's number two, but actually suicide and self harm, so you're absolutely right this is not just about porn, but our mass media inexplicably is more interested in that particular thing than in anything else. Is network level the only way of doing this? No, it isn't. It's definitely a good way, and TalkTalk is doing it, we will see, because bear in mind

they all have agreed to have independent verification and audit what they are doing which is really excellent. We will get some hard reliable data from an independent third party. TalkTalk have done a network level, the other three haven't said yet which way they're going to do it. You could achieve a similar result to that which TalkTalk have achieved by doing it at router level, so that's the box that the ISP sends to your home, you could put stuff on there which would do something similar and in fact if you did it at router level and I've been scolded before for being too techie about these things so I'll refrain, you would have a range of options available to you for a sophisticated and more nuisance approach. So I think router level is definitely worth looking at.

Andy Phippen: Can I just pick up on that point that you said, will this solve the problem once and for all? No it wouldn't. Technology will never solve social problems. What it will provide is the means to control it, but technology itself will never solve what are essentially social problems facilitated by technology.

Andrea Leadsom: And just about the classifications, would that help?

John Carr: Yes, BBFC have got a very well understood system of classification that covers all of the...there are very well known and trusted classification systems available. This argument what's porn? What isn't porn? We have been through that a million times. This cinema industry couldn't exist without a classification system. There are systems available, how they might be adopted and used is a technical question, but it's a simple technical question, not a complicated one.

Andy Phippen: In defence of the adult content providers, there is an opt-in there,

there are systems like NTA and SafeSearch where the reputable adult content providers will already flag up in the meta-tagging of their data, "this is adult content". From a pure capitalist viewpoint, they don't want children to see pornography because children won't buy pornography, and the pornography industry is about making money. There is already things that exist within the pornography industry, but the problem is would these things control the more under the radar things, would it control things being implemented through file sharing mechanisms, would it be able to control things passed around by instant messaging.

Claire Perry: We did hear in the last session that the great drive in the porn industry has been the free content, so there's always been an arms race on what is put up from legitimate porn sites who want to monetise people in the free domain, which is an issue. Andrew, then David and then over to Jo.

Andrew Selous: I just wanted to come back to something you said earlier Andy, you said you didn't want to see a situation where people would have to ask the provider to provide them with pornography. But active choice isn't that at all, it's actually something different. It's just about making sure that subscribers have to make a choice about what sort of content they want in their homes and what their children see. I think it's important to make that distinction.

Andy Phippen: No I think that issue is really not important at all. My colleague Jim did hear an interesting sorry over the weekend, where someone who has a church website, O2 blocked the website because it had the word sex in one of the sermons, and he went through a hassle to

get the site unblocked. Well it said we can let you have access to sites, but it's a church website which demonstrates sometimes the problem with filtering, if you want to prevent access to a lot of adult content, you'll hit a lot of false positives as well. So this guy now has on his record O2 record, that this guy would like to see adult content.

Andrew Selous: Is it not possible to have more advanced levels or more sophisticated types of filtering?

John Carr: You don't have to ring up and say "I'm a pervert; would you let me have the porn?" You ask for an adult bar to be lifted, and so it's gambling, alcohol, so it won't tell you anything more about the person's attitude to porn than it would tell you about a person's attitude to the early works of Immanuel Kant. I mean, it's all out there on the internet.

Claire Perry: Is it the case that if you subscribe to adult channels via your Sky package that you have to put your hand up and say "I'm a pervert I like pornography?" And then of course, we know search companies collect tons of data anyway, so the question is what is done with that?

Andrew Selous: It wasn't quite the point I was raising, I was just saying surely it's more possible to have a more technically advanced level of filter, that doesn't block a site that has the word sex in.

Andy Phippen: But the vast majority of filtering technology is either metadata-based or keyword based. It's very difficult to identify adult content through image processing because you can say "alright, if you detect a lot of flesh tones, that's pornographic" but maybe that's not the case. It wouldn't pick up stuff around

bondage sites or anything like that because you are not looking for a lot of flesh. It's very difficult unless there's explicit expression of what the content is, which is what I mean. The legitimate providers already provide that this is adult content.

John Carr: Nobody should argue that technical tools will always get things right 100% of the time. That will never happen. The question is on balance, does it work with an acceptably high level of accuracy? And I think the filtering software that's available today does and it's still getting better.

David Rutley: Thank you. And thanks for coming. It's encouraging to hear the both of you from very different perspectives talking about protecting children so that's tremendous. There are limitations and you both made that point. What I'm intrigued about is what other options are there for parents? Some of the options we looked at are in terms of where you locate computers, are they allowed to be in the bedrooms? Ways of monitoring kids – no one wants to be draconian about this. We're dealing with youngsters who need coaching and guidance sometimes. Any tips, thoughts you might have there, how do we educate parents and are there examples internationally or elsewhere or in communities in the UK where we've got a handle on this?

Andy Phippen: I would give a big thumbs up to Vodafone who a while ago produced an excellent magazine for parents on the sort of things their kids get up to online, and it was a really good publication drawing on lots of advice which was very readable and down to earth from an awful lot of experts. When we look at child internet safety in schools, filtering is one of twenty eight factors that were

considered and they range from things like policy through to community engagement to parental engagement. I think a lot of it does fall down to fundamental parenting. A parent said to me once, it's terrible, my child is online at 3 or 4 in the morning, I said switch the router off at 9. She said I can't do that. I said why not, you're the parent. My sister in law said her daughter who is 11 would like to use her laptop in her bedroom. I said why would you put a video camera onto the internet for your 11 year old daughter to use on the internet in her bedroom. She said when you put it like that, it sounds a bit harsh. What can she do in the bedroom that she can't do on the kitchen table? It's just fundamental parenting. Just to say "oh it's the internet, we don't really understand that thing" is really an absolution of responsibility as far as the parent is concerned. Public education is difficult, schools have a role to play and try very hard to engage parents in these things, but again and again we find parental engagement the most challenging aspect of internet safety because they hope somebody else is doing it for them.

John Carr: And it's certainly never been part of our case that technical tools are a substitute for good parenting, no way. The best possible support for a child will normally, not always, come from their parents. And the best defence that a child has for dealing with any of these things is their own resilience; what they've got between their left and right ears. It takes a village to raise a child, I very strongly believe that. It's not just the responsibility of the ISPs to deal with all of these issues, definitely not. Families in particular and schools have a very important role to play in education. How you engage parents is a challenge across the whole public health spectrum and it's

not always that easy and I did two hundred meetings of parent teacher associations in different parts of England a few years ago and I went to one school in Nottingham where a hundred people turned up I knew it wasn't just to see me. I went to a school in Leicester the following night, two parents turned up and that was about the level of engagement with parents that that school has and it varies such a lot and so do families. There isn't a silver bullet, there isn't one single way. Location of computers and devices, a lot depends on the age of the child. Obviously, the younger the child, the greater the level of supervision that they need from their parents. As children get older too, they have a right to privacy, they have a right to explore, you can't lock these things down forever and particularly with wireless enabled devices now, you can't just have one device in one room anymore and that's where the internet is, because it's on their phones, games consoles, laptops, and so on. It's more complicated now.

Claire Perry: John, thank you. We're going to finish the session with a question from Jo Swinson MP.

Jo Swinson: Thank you. My apologies for missing the first few minutes of the session. My question is aimed at Professor Phippen, I'm just trying to get my head around the objections to this tool that parents can have. I entirely accept what you say about the engagement of parents being the most important thing and finding ways to do that being the starting point for the solution. But in order to give them a tool to help them implement what they're wanting in terms of their children not coming across pornographic content either through design or stumbling across it and I'm sure

this is not solely an issue for children because I'm sure that a lot of people and many in this room who do a perfectly legitimate search about rape statistics or something else and some perfect site has ended up on the Google results. This is actually an issue that adults would welcome in terms of being able to make the decision to say that those are the types of sites that I do not want coming up in the filters. So as a liberal, I'm not in favor of censorship if adults want to do things consenting and see whatever they like between consenting adults, absolutely fair enough. But I don't see this as an issue of censorship, it's about giving that choice of saying here's a button that you click and you have to opt-in or if that option is checked, that these sites albeit imperfectly, because filters don't work for everything, will generally be less likely to come up. What is the objection?

Andy Phippen: I don't have an objection. If it's come across that I have an objection to the tools then I certainly don't. My fear is that if the tools were in place and it's not alongside a public education effort, then the absolution of responsibility of the parent continues. By default, when you log into Google for the first time on a new computer, SafeSearch will be on, so you have to make the choice to switch SafeSearch off. So that's a parental choice and if that means that the computer in the living room means kids find porn that's down to the parent to have made that choice. I fear that if they say the ISPs dealing with this therefore we don't need to worry about it, it's a dangerous precedent to set given that parental engagement is our most challenging aspect around child internet safety.

Claire Perry: Thank you very much. Can I ask our next witnesses to take their seats please.

ORAL EVIDENCE SESSION FOUR

Claire Perry: Thank you very much for joining us today for our second session. David Austin, BBFC, Martin Large, the CEO of tibboh, an Internet Service Provider that's adopted the BBFC's guidelines offers the services of rated internet access and Chris Woolard of Ofcom. Thank you Chris, for joining us to talk a little bit about regulators. I'm just going to kick off with the general questions and then ask colleagues to pitch in. And I want to ask for your view on the problem of online child protection, do you think we are doing enough, specifically the internet space, do you think companies are doing enough, and if not what do you think is the answer? Perhaps David I can start with you.

David Austin: Companies are doing quite a lot, but there's always more that can be done. We're working in partnership with the Home Entertainment Industry. Back in 2008, following research by TNS that concluded the public would like to see better labelling of film and video content being distributed online, we got together with some of the major Hollywood studios including Disney, Fox, Paramount, people like that, and we set up together a voluntary rating scheme that applies BBFC standards criteria and labels to content being distribute online, so we're talking about film and video content. From fairly humble beginnings in 2008, all the Hollywood makes, apart from one, are members of the scheme. We have twenty-nine members altogether including content providers and aggregators. We've classified over two hundred thousand items of content for online distribution and that's not to say that they're all being exploited at the moment and that our

labels are being used. One of our members is "Blinkbox" represented by Tesco and they're currently offered around two and a half thousand items of content online, most of which carry our labels. Although we've classified over two hundred thousand items of content, they're not all being exploited. The part of the industry that we deal with quite regularly that hasn't been so interested in joining the self-regulatory scheme is the adult industry. The picture is mixed to be generous; we do have a couple of adult industry members who are voluntarily submitting their content online with BBFC labels, which is Harmony and Darker Enterprises. For the same reasons that the mainstream entertainment industry wants to join the scheme, because it's good for their sense of corporate social responsibility because parents are far more likely to download a film that has a BBFC classification than one that doesn't. For the adult industry, the market forces are applied in the opposite direction because a number of porn companies distributing content are saying "okay, we've got on the one hand a website here that says it's been censored by the BBFC which is completely okay and one that is totally uncensored and not seen by anyone", so the market forces are driving it in the opposite direction. I think more could be done to encourage the adult industry to engage in responsible labelling.

Claire Perry: Chris, does Ofcom have a remit for internet use at the moment and what's your view on this question on whether we have enough online protection?

Chris Woolard: In terms of our statutory powers they principally relate to broadcasting, so they don't relate to online content. There are some very

limited exceptions to that but in terms of the sorts of content that people have been talking about around this table this afternoon, we don't have the extent that... what we do have is a duty towards media literacy helping people to have some of the tools to navigate on the internet space. And we work alongside and as part of UKCCIS in terms of doing some of that work. Looking at the first question that you asked, as many people have said so far including in your first session, it's a pretty mixed picture. There are some areas where people are genuinely trying to make advances. I think that the draft code that the ISPs are putting together is an attempt in that direction. There are other parts of the landscape where, as David said, the market forces are driving in the completely different direction.

Claire Perry: Martin, you clearly think there is more to be done because you started a company that does this.

Martin Large: I think when we first started out we built a filtering system that was one glove fits all. Probably right for a 12 year old, but wholly inappropriate for an 8 year old and utterly useless for an 18 year old in terms of the content that they could access. So the reason that we went down the route of taking a more granular approach was so that we could serve, initially it was in the world of education key stages one through four to deliver appropriate content. I think there's another piece that hasn't been addressed so far this afternoon and that is whether there is inappropriate content. There are companies in this country that are built, technologies that would allow you to monitor traffic across social networking sites to pick up some of the more unpleasant behaviours.

Claire Perry: Thank you. Mark.

Mark Garnier: Thank you. You were talking about the classification of film. Is it not fair to say that it's in the porn providers' interest that they are getting the right audience? That they would rather have a perfectly legitimate view of this stuff, than if someone comes across it accidentally? Is there not an argument that suggests that there would be a voluntary tagging of their content so the internet service provider could put an automatic block on all those sites that have got this voluntary tag or otherwise? Is that the proposition or are they simply not interested in responsible...?

David Austin: In our experience, the porn industry is divided, it's not one size fits all. They have different attitudes, some do have more social responsibility the ones who do label their stuff and put it into more recognised guidelines. Others don't because they see a marked advantage in selling stuff they can sell as totally uncensored.

Mark Garnier: To absolutely anybody?

David Austin: Some companies..

Mark Garnier: So to a certain extent, do you say these companies are specifically targeting those people who would be excluded by a filter?

David Austin: Possibly, possibly. I mean one...

Mark Garnier: That's quite a big thing to say.

David Austin: One of the issues that we have...We work quite close with the IWF and they are very active in looking at adult content online. They identify sites and they get sites taken down. They can

only apply things like the laws on extreme pornography and obscenity, they can't apply a number of the tests that we apply under the Video Recordings Act because the Video Recordings Act, like Ofcom, have no statute responsibility online. We have come across instances where the IWF is unable to act because the content is not either obscene or extreme pornography. It's things like material that could encourage interest in abusive relationships, such as role-playing as children, incest role-play, rape role-play, this kind of thing that we believe is harmful and we intervene physically under the Video Recordings Act but online, this content is freely available by certain companies.

Mark Garnier: And yet the remit of this inquiry is to try to stop pornography getting to children and I would even maintain it's some of the dodgy stuff...even those providers would accept that just by a simple tagging mechanism of their site; you could have a block by the ISPs.

Chris Woolard: I think there's a couple of questions, the first is the definition. I mean it's not to reopen the, "is it Page 3 of The Sun debate". But I think when you're into the hardest end of pornographic content, so in other words the BBFC's R18, clearly on television you can't show R18 material, and you shouldn't online unless it's sitting behind clear protection. There's this odd hinterland between something that's absolutely illegal because it would become before obscenity laws and it's stronger than something the BBFC would classify as R18 and it's the kind of content that David just outlined. That's completely illegal on television, so we have a very clear view of what's not possible to broadcast on television. I think when we come to dealing with those who are in the adult industry; it really is

an incredibly broad range of people. Some, who are very very close to accepting all kinds of regulations who want to appear on television in certain types of very limited and controlled ways, all the way through to the sort of people the IWF want to take down. The sort of ideas of responsible compliant companies that we're used to finding in all the other sectors which we deal with and regulate, I think some of those norms just simply don't apply.

Claire Perry: Fiona.

Fiona Bruce: Thank you. Good afternoon gentlemen. David, could I ask you what the BBFC's contribution was towards the recently introduced ParentPort website and how you think that might help parents seeking to protect their children.

David Austin: I have to thank Ofcom first of all for taking the lead on this. The creation of ParentPort, a recommendation of Reg Bailey which John referred to in the previous session, and parents told him during his research that there was a gap. Parents didn't know where to complain to if they saw any inappropriate content poster on a tube or in a film at the cinema or an advert post so Reg recommended the creation of this port, a one stop shop where parents could put content. Ofcom kindly organised six of the regulators, the ASA, ATVOD, BBFC, BBC Trust, PCC, and the Video Standards Council. Over the summer, we started work in June to create a design from scratch and get a working model of a website, BBFC worked closely with ATVOD on a triage system which is the heart of ParentPort to point parents in the right direction on which site to go to and we also did quite a bit of work on the branding of the site all under the expert supervision of Alison Martin from Ofcom and the site was launched formally by the

Prime Minister last week and I'm told by Alison that there were ten thousand unique visitors on the first day of operation of the site. We've seen our own traffic from consumers increase not massively but to an extent since ParentPort has come into play. And we have people come to us in a traditional way because people know about the BBFC and generally know where to complain and if they're coming through ParentPort and we've seen traffic increase. I was talking to the BBFC last week and they've seen their traffic increase as well. It's a good initiative and it was an edifying experience to be a part of this work. Although we all have pretty good relationships between all the regulators, it was the first time we all worked so intensely in a short period of time to achieve something so good.

Claire Perry: Thank you. Andrea?

Andrea Leadsom: Thank you. Mr Woolard, can you just confirm from a technical point of view, if I have an internet-enabled television, I can watch on BBC iPlayer something completely obscene at six o'clock in the afternoon, technically, would that be right?

Chris Woolard: Technically – depending on what particular piece of content you're watching, it can have certain age warnings on it. But from a technical perspective, if you knew how to work your way around those controls you probably could.

Andrea Leadsom: So therefore, as the regulator for television, it is already an issue for you and will be increasingly as more TV becomes internet-enabled. So I was just wondering what kind of forward planning you're doing to recognise the fact that either the watershed is now completely overtaken by events or you

actually have to do something to enforce the watershed.

Chris Woolard: So there are two questions in what you just said. Firstly is putting a sense of scale around the issue at this moment in time. So a large number, depending on who you believe, some say 40% of TVs are now being sold have the capability of being internet-enabled. It's a much, much smaller number probably single figures that actually plug a broadband cable into the back of those televisions.

Andrea Leadsom: But you'd accept that that's going to rapidly change. I happen to have two internet-enabled televisions in my house and a 7 year old daughter, so it's already an issue for me and its going to rapidly increase over the next couple of years, would you agree with that?

Chris Woolard: Potentially, sorry just a one bit of fact and I'll come back to answer your question, the other piece to bear in mind is and our research that backs us up year after year that this is completely counterintuitive; that watching the television or satellite cable or whatever it might be in a linear schedule is on the increase. So all the things we say about people accessing what's traditionally considered as television programs on an iPad or through an internet-connected television or whatever it might be, it's all additional effectively. People are still watching television as television. And in the latest round of research we've done, parents still find the watershed in particular as an increasingly useful tool still. Now the question we face and are indeed facing at the moment is in a world in which you're going to see more connected devices, in a world where things like TiVo and YouView are specifically designed to give

you a seamless experience as a consumer, in other words you don't know if you're in linear broadcasting or into a internet connection. How do we manage those sort of breakthrough relationships?

Andrea Leadsom: And that's exactly what I'm asking you, what forward planning are you doing so that the watershed doesn't just become meaningless?

Chris Woolard: The territory we are in at the moment is we are doing quite a bit of thinking, quite a bit of research with a wide range of people including a wide range of parents about what their expectations are in that environment, around how to regulate. It could be a bunch of amazing sophisticated people out there who intimately understand that because I am watching now on video on-demand it's a matter for adults to regulate and because I'll watch it live and linear it is for Ofcom to regulate. But that's not going to be the case.

Andrea Leadsom: But sort, just to specifically answer my question, it sounds as if you're not doing anything at the moment, you're just researching the issue, you're not actually doing anything to recognise the fact that already plenty of people can access obscene material at 6 pm on their television, in contravention of the watershed. That's a fact and it doesn't sound as though you're actually doing anything.

Chris Woolard: There's a number of things we need to be quite careful about. Firstly, in terms of obscene material as defined by law, no one can access obscene material anywhere on television.

Andrea Leadsom: 18 rated material, should we say?

Chris Woolard: Yes, so in terms of material that's considered suitable for adults, there are a range of ways in which you can obviously access that over the internet or on a PC or on an internet connection to a PC.

Andrea Leadsom: But my point is, if you are the regulator for broadcast and you're effectively not the regulator for internet, the point I'm trying to make is that it is now just a grey, blurry sort of area and therefore as the regulator for broadcast you either have to say that you can't continue to do our job or you have to take up the responsibility for regulating internet as well, isn't that right?

Chris Woolard: I think where we are at the moment is, there is definitely a grey area and that's absolutely a matter for the Government to decide on.

Claire Perry: Are you voting for legislation?

Chris Woolard: Sorry, just a moment. At the moment, the Government has the view that it's going for legislation protection. It is obviously going to be a matter for this House to decide what powers they want to give us as a statutory regulator. As a statutory regulator, we can't enforce the law if the law doesn't say we can enforce it.

Andrea Leadsom: So do you want us to legislate? Or are you writing to us...Is it chicken and egg?

Claire Perry: This is a very important point. As a statutory regulator, you are guided by Parliamentary decisions. On the one hand, the industry is telling us not to regulate them, and on the other hand

the regulators are saying this is a grey area.

Chris Woolard: Yes. Can I just finish one point? The first is there are clearly a number of things we can do with parents to navigate that landscape at the moment, ParentPort is absolutely designed to do that. It's to say, here's an alphabet soup of regulators and here's a very simple way of working out, if you're worried particularly about content and want some more advice, we can try and get you to the right place. That's the first thing to say. Second thing to say is... the question you just asked really takes to the heart of ultimately what does Parliament want to regulate and I think it has to be very specific if it wants to regulate here. What is the thing it wants to get out? Because I think there is a very broad spectrum of content that ranges from suitable for 15 year olds, suitable for 18 year olds, R18+ and there are all sorts of separate categories in terms of is it suicide sites, is it pornography, is it violent? I think if your report is heading in that particular direction, then there really is a need to be as specific as you possibly can...what is the problem you're really trying to get a grip on?

Claire Perry: May I ask just because there are many other questions, it's a fascinating point. If I could just take in three questions, Jo, Dennis, and Peter.

Jo Swinson: I wanted to talk a little bit more about TiVo which I think sounds fascinating. Just first of all, a point of clarification, the websites that you apply these verification settings to, is it just film and video given that it's BBFC or it's just the whole website?

Martin Large: No. Everything.

Jo Swinson: Would you be able to explain the range of the different types of sites that you would give an 18 rating to? Does it include pro-ana or violence or a whole range?

Martin Large: It's interesting that John Carr talked about TalkTalk applying nine different categories, I think we have got down to a slightly more granular level with something like fifty-eight different categories including alcohol, gambling, self-harm, extreme and then eventually you get down the list of pornography. What we've done is applied the categorisations, for instance, on sex the BBFC would apply. So nude, kissing, mention of making love would be versus the more extreme nature.

Jo Swinson: I think that sounds like a really interesting, sophisticated way of doing it. I suppose my main question to you therefore is how doable is this? Because in my mind I'm thinking surely whatever you do is a drop in the ocean of all the sites out there. How do you possibly keep on top of sites, what's your process? How many sites can you assess in a day? How many hours does that take? What's the cost of doing that?

Martin Large: You can take a very simplistic approach in white list or black list. So for instance, to save us reviewing the BBC everyday day in, day out, we'll white list the BBC. At the end of the day, you have to be able to do it dynamically. So somebody asks for a website which has just been put up today, it will be reviewed, so there's a degree of latency but as you build your technology to work faster and faster, the speed with which you deliver results will get much faster. You will get to the point, and what we have built into our technology, where people suggest what this website should be classified as,

U, PG, 12, 15, 18. Our hope is as more and more users use it, you're doing less of the review on the fly.

Claire Perry: Denis.

Denis Macshane: I think this is a question to Mr Austin or Mr Woolard. In a nutshell, if you could play God, be the Minister, write the law, a point my colleague Andrea made, what in a headline would you like to see?

David Austin: Our specialty is film and video. In terms of the mainstream home entertainment industry, I think they're already taking a highly responsible line at getting stuff classified, putting labels, ensuring that parents get all the information they need before they decide whether to download this video or that video, so they're actually behaving in a pretty responsible way. As we touched on earlier with Mr Garnier, there's a broad distinction between them and the adult industry where the market forces are driving the home entertainment industry towards a responsible position and in many respects the market forces are driving the adult industry away. I think that's reflected in the fact that we have hundreds of customers in the physical world that distribute content. Many, many of those are distributors of porn. Only two of our customers in the online world, where they don't have to get any regulation at all – because they don't need anything from us - have chosen to join the scheme and label BBFC content. The home entertainment industry is doing it to a greater extent, the adult industry isn't.

Denis Macshane: The force of the triple Xs to side up so you at least you know where they are and they're registered...

David Austin: And to apply standards and release online content that isn't harmful including to vulnerable adults.

Denis Macshane: Thank you.

Claire Perry: Peter, on to you.

Peter Aldous: I was going to ask Mr Austin what obstacles does he face in classifying films that are streamed on computers?

Claire Perry: Oh I'm sorry, you need to play God, Christopher, we'll come back to you.

Chris Woolard: Firstly, I'm treading on delicate ground because the Government has its Communications Review and it's going to be a policy map for Ministers for what they like but given you asked the question the way you did, Mr Macshane, from my perspective the question you raise about convergence is absolutely the live one. It is the fact that a lot of the traditional boundaries will blur quite considerably over the next 10 to 15 years as we go forward. And I think from our perspective we've got to have a position where from a public point of view they've got a degree of consistency and liability about how they feel that will work and that may be a mixture of statutory regulation, code regulation, search regulation. It's certainly not "Ofcom is going to do everything" probably that might not necessarily be a great outcome. What I think it's got to be is that the people need to have a clear understanding of what they can expect in what particular space they're in which up until now I think to some degree people have had. I think a convergence of the point where it gets horribly blurry in front of a lot of people who don't spend their time thinking about technology.

Claire Perry: Right, Thank you. David?

David Austin: We have classified films for streaming online. Our system is based on pre-classifications; we watch the films beforehand to make sure it's the appropriate age rating. There may be stuff we haven't seen in advance...we can come up with all sorts of regulating models and there's a model that we apply in cinema which is potentially useful online with digital screens and cinemas, it's much easier and more cost effective to show alternative concepts such as live music events shown shortly afterwards. So if you've got Metallica on tour in Japan, you can see this in cinema in the UK. There's no way we can classify that under the Licensing Act by watching it in advance. So we've worked on a model with local authorities and similar exhibitors whereby it gets to BBFC as live classification and that's linked to any age restrictions on entry to the event itself so if you've got alternative cabaret or concerts that have age restrictions, then they will get a BBFC age restriction and we'll say don't do anything other than 12A because cinemas don't want to have lots of kids unsupervised by parents coming to see something. So we worked up a model where we don't see the content, where it gets at least the same rating as the restrictions on ticket sales. It's not beyond our capabilities working with the industry coming up with a concept that hasn't been seen immediately or in advance but can carry some sort of rating. If after seven days, this content is still being shown in cinemas, then it does have to get a classification – there's no reason why it shouldn't. But that's an example of a model that might be relevant in that situation.

Claire Perry: Thank you. Andrew, perhaps you can put your questions together and respond.

Andrew Selous: Yes, I'll just make a general comment. As MPs, we welcome your advice and input on how Parliament should be tasking this forward. I just wanted to come back to ParentPort which we touched on earlier on, you said around ten thousand parents went to this site. Please tell us what actually happens where parents come in and complain, what is the follow up to these parental complaints?

David Austin: The parents are asked a number of questions to start, "where did you see this? Was it a film in the cinema or a post on the tube?" and they answer two or three maximum questions and it takes them to the regulator and they come to the regulator's enquiry desk, or website and I can only speak for the BBFC but we answer every single letter of comment or complaint or communication within ten working days so we treat ParentPort in exactly the same way, so parents will get an answer from us within ten days if it's about content relevant to the BBFC.

Andrew Selous: When you say an answer from you, what action is taken if something has overstepped the mark?

David Austin: When we – specifically about the BBFC – when we give a decision on a film or video that's a legally enforceable decision, we cannot ever change that. If a parent says I saw this film, and I thought it should have been a 15 but you have it a 12A, we'll explain why it got a 12A rather than a 15. And parents can have an impact on subsequent video release. I'll give you an example where this happened, there's a US film based on the British aristocracy which we

classified 18 uncut for the cinema, but it contains a suicide technique that's not very well known. Now because there's a high risk of underage viewing on video because this particular film called Rules of Attraction had a particular appeal to younger teenage girls because of who was in the film, and a member of the public who was a doctor wrote and said "you know this isn't a very well known suicide technique, so what are you going to do about it when it comes to the video release?" So we took medical advice and as a result of that member of the public contacting us, we cut the film for its DVD release because it contained potentially harmful content and because there was an appeal to underage girls. So parents can impact individual decisions where they haven't yet been classified between film and video. Every four years we have a major public consultation exercise where we update our guidelines and the public tells us what they think is acceptable for different age categories, so the last two guidelines in 2005 and 2009 involved twenty thousand members of the public so we encourage parents to take part in that. We have a website for parents where they're invited to comment generally and feed into our policy.

Claire Perry: That is great because there is regulatory framework. The example I used to use was the American Girl website which got changed, if you Google americangirls.com you got something very different. What would happen if the parent registered that concern on ParentPort because it sounds like there's absolutely no mechanism for doing anything about that?

David Austin: There's no BBFC mechanism. Would it go to ATVOD?

Chris Woolard: It all depends on the site. If it's a site that leads to VOD content it could be regulated by ATVOD, it'd probably end up there.

Claire Perry: But if it's just porn, stills, text...

Chris Woolard: Essentially, it's not regulated by UK law in some way shape or form. The point of ParentPort is to provide a way to navigate through the landscape in terms of what's regulated and what's not regulated. So the idea of the site is to get you to a regulator if there is a regulator who covers it and it's worth saying just by way of background before we launched, we tested it with Mumsnet mums so they put together one thousand parents to test it. 96% of them said it was really helpful and 98% of them said they would recommend it to others or maybe the other way around. It's a situation where it's another tool; it's not going to sweep up absolutely everything that anyone could ever have concerns about.

Claire Perry: In which case, we're back to this conundrum, which is the case of the internet where there is no regulator and therefore any content on that which a parent objected to other than expressing concern there is really nothing that could happen currently as a way of dealing with that concern.

David Austin: Short of it being absolutely illegal

Claire Perry: So under the Child Pornography 2008, Violence and Sexual Offences Act. David, I'll ask you to wrap up this session with a final question.

David Rutley: Sure. Thanks again and this is a very fascinating debate not least of which on this gaping hole of the

regulatory regime but we'll put that to one side. I'm really intrigued, Mr Large, with what you've been doing on a voluntary basis, building on points that Jo has already made. Looking at this not from a protection perspective but more from a commercial one per se, my business stage is always do customers want it, can you make money from it, what's the easiest implementation and I'm just thinking with that you've been taking as a classification process, is this helping your business? What are the cost implications? Can you make money from it? And if so, what sort of moral or commercial questions should we be putting on other ISPs saying get cracking on it faster?

Martin Large: I think to answer that question; I'll refer back to what John Carr said. This is very expensive. Having said that, tibboh was built for a world of education initially and is financed by two entrepreneurs. The answer really is that we thought it looked like a good idea at the time and we invested in it. Making it a commercial venture is much much more difficult when you're competing against the large ISPs, particularly in mobile broadband, where they will apply into schools a one glove fits all filtering system or no filtering system at all or an adult filtering system that can be removed by sending an email or making a telephone call. It's very expensive.

Claire Perry: Would the cost come down if there was a collective filter? Because one of the things we talked to some of the industry white labellers, who already exist and provide filtering technologies for TalkTalk for example or other parental controls. Could cost cut down if there was something that all ISPs could tap into?

Martin Large: Absolutely.

Claire Perry: Well good, thank you so much for joining us today. We'll start with the next witnesses.

ORAL EVIDENCE SESSION FOUR

Claire Perry: Right, we'll kick off. You'll notice I've shifted one to the left, something inadvertent has come up and I'm very much afraid I'm going to have to slip off and leave the session. But Fiona Mactaggart who has been working really closely with all of us on this has agreed to chair this final session. I'm just going to say a really big thank you to our witnesses in this fifth group. We've got Dido Harding from TalkTalk who is here representing TalkTalk but will also talk about Active Choice, Kip Meek from Everything Everywhere who was doing lots of work on the mobile space, Jonny Shipp from Telefonica, O2 Europe, Nicholas Landsman who represents the whole of the ISP industry group and Matt Lambert from Microsoft, delighted to have you as well, thank you so much. Fiona, I'll let you start the session and slip away unobtrusively.

Fiona Mactaggart: Absolutely, I'm sorry I wasn't able to be here earlier, I had wanted to be but there was a question which affected a hospital in my constituency in Health Questions so I had to be there. Now you are in a way the most important guys because you're the people who are delivering this and the changes that you can make to your processes could really make a difference. I think one of the things that we've said in this group is that TalkTalk has made it easier than many for a home to actually protect all the machinery in the home so perhaps Dido you'd like to start by explaining to us how that works, what you've done.

Dido Harding: Sure, happily. We launched our product HomeSafe in May. HomeSafe is a network-based filter. So what that means is that once you've configured it, it protects any device that is using your internet connection to your home, whether it's a PC, Xbox, Playstation, Wi-Fi enabled phone, or iPad and you configure it on our website in your account and it takes no more than a couple of minutes to set it up. It's taken a couple of years for us to develop it and basically it means that all internet traffic that our customers use goes through this filter and then they, as customers, can configure how that is presented into their own home. Launched in the middle of May, we have approximately over one hundred and fifty thousand customers who have now set it up and are using it, so it's very early days but we're very pleased with that as a run rate of customer take up for a new product is very good.

Fiona Mactaggart: Is it better than you predicted?

Dido Harding: Yes, it's ahead of what we were expecting. To give you an idea, I think that this is an area that is very the early days of customers understanding what they can and can't do. We've been on TV advertising it in September so we're very committed to help our customers understand what they can do, that's one of the biggest pieces of feedback that our customers gave us is we don't understand this area, we don't know how to make the internet a bit safer, help us. So last week on the back of the meeting in Downing Street after the Bailey Report we sent out an email to about a million of our customers saying that we fully supported the Government's position and the next day ten thousand more customers configured HomeSafe. It's really early

days in the sort of dawning awareness of how these tools work. So we're very pleased with it, we think that our customers want it. I probably missed out on the most important thing which is that it's free. So we think that that should be just a part of everyday use of the internet and not something that you have to be slightly richer to be able to afford.

Fiona Mactaggart: David.

David Rutley: Thank you very much. I'm really encouraged to hear what you're doing. I've been in two meetings, one previous to this week which captured a large number of MPs. This subject has got even more people in the room, more MPs from across the range of parties and across the social scale. It's fantastic that you've taken that step forward. What I'd like to ask the rest of the group is that given that TalkTalk has taken the lead here and given that there's a very clear interest from parents, legislators, and Parliamentarians, what's stopping you from doing a similar thing and why aren't you doing it more speedily?

Jonny Shipp: Along with the other operators, the mobile area has been covered in this respect for many years. We launched a Code of Practice which was released in 2004 and updated in 2009 and this provides for classification and filtering on the mobile network. From a mobile perspective, my answer is that we've been doing it for a long time on the mobile side, mobile operators are moving into the fixed business. Where we're coming from we've done a lot but there's always more to do so in the case of O2's fixed offer, we offer parental controls on the PC for free (McAfee software) and we also operate public Wi-Fi spots which we heard earlier is another area that you might want to talk about. In the O2 case at

least, there is a network filter there. We're coming at it from a different direction as a part of the industry from TalkTalk, we have network filters and independent classification and were continuing on working to take it forward to the other platforms. The other thing I should add is it's easy to get focused on the tools because parents want us to use tools and technology to help keep their children safe. There is, as the discussion had been earlier today, an important role for everyone to play in providing guidance to parents, to encourage parents to have conversations with their children about media literacy if you like and how they use the internet.

David Rutley: How about the ISPs more generally?

Nicholas Landsman: More generally, we've heard about network-level, device-level, router-level; there's a variety of different types of how you can filter content that affects children. The members of ISPA, which include all the companies and lots of the smaller ones, are making their decisions about how best they can protect children, provide the tools to their customers, and they're doing that by talking to the parents and providing a variety of different methods. There's no silver bullet, you may have heard this in a previous session, there's no perfect solution. There are advantages with network level as with TalkTalk, but if you take the device outside the home, it's not. Equally, there are advantages and disadvantages with device level blockings so if you put software on a laptop it might cover things like chat as well which is a serious concern for parents. The ISPs are all working on different types of tools to help parents but they all have advantages and disadvantages and the concern we have is how best to work with

Government, Parliament, parents, schools to make sure right across the board the best levels and types of safety for children are put in place.

Andrea Leadsom: Thanks. I think you'd have to accept though, Mr Landsman, that it's not working because the statistics are pretty awful and in the last session we heard about the damage being done to children who are watching inappropriate material and not just internet porn, but also suicide sites and so on. So I think you have to accept that it's simply not working. And you're talking about how the ISPs wish to provide it their way and do things their way, would you say that there is a case for Government to say no you've got to get better, and to actually legislate? You heard in the last session that there is this big grey area, should Parliament be doing something about that at this point?

Nicholas Landsman: Government clearly has done something; it has commissioned the Bailey Review that's found very interesting findings which the ISPs are now digesting. We've responded to the Bailey Review, Recommendation Number 5 about Active Choice is very important and the ISPs and TalkTalk as you probably heard have introduced a code to try to improve the way in which children get it, so it's not perfect. So I wouldn't say that it's not working, but you're right in that not enough parents have taken up these tools that are widely available and that would be the measure of success in my view. How can you get more parents to use whether it's TalkTalk's product at network level or ISP providers' products at device levels to use them? It's not an easy task. I don't think legislation is required, I think what the internet is doing in conjunction with schools and what Government is doing is some good

first steps and there is more that needs to be done. But this is not an issue that ISPs have been complacent on, this is an issue that's been tackled by ISPs perhaps very poorly in the early days fifteen years ago, but they're providing in most cases the large companies free software to customers. The question is how do you get those customers and parents to actually put it on computers or actively activate network-level controls so that children are protected and it's not an easy answer. Government has also partly a role to play which I'll have to ask questions on if you wish.

Fiona Mactaggart: Annette.

Annette Brooke: You led straight to my question actually. I think one of the concerns of this group is the parents who are unlikely to actually access what you are developing at the moment and that has to be our biggest concern and it is I think the crunch question. You're providing for what there is definitely a demand but I think what we need to know is what can you do? What can Government do? What can we do? To actually reach out to those parents who are trying to do the right thing by buying equipment for their children but really do not have the knowledge or confidence to go along with what you've suggested?

Dido Harding: I think that internet safety is directly analogous to road safety when I was growing up in the 70s. HomeSafe is a bit of a seatbelt but you actually need a seatbelt, air bag, the Green Cross Code, "Clunk Click" advertising campaign, so I think there is a role for government to play particularly in ways of awareness of the whole range of internet safety issues. I think we are at the early stages of the technological innovation that will create, if you said that you wanted to make

HomeSafe network-based filtering a seat belt and a seatbelt is mandatory, the reality is there's only one car in the show that's got a seatbelt at the moment so it's a little early days for that. So I think you need to be creating conditions for competition on this issue so that we are developing different technologies because there isn't a single golden bullet that solves this problem.

Kip Meek: Can I chip in on this? Just quickly on what Everything Everywhere does which is the company I'm representing here today. We look at this as three buckets; the first is mobiles, then fixed business, and then finally education. And in each of those areas we're doing things, none of which as Dido says, and many other said, represents a silver bullet. There is no silver bullet because technology changes, consumer behaviour changes. There is definitely work for Government here but the Government has to work with the industry because government is not the solution. The notion that somehow government can step in and solve something here is not right. So what you have to do, if I may suggest, is you have to test whether the commitment on this side of the table is there and I believe it is. I think every single one of the companies is working very hard on this and sees it as an important issue and has in many instances been working on it for many, many years. But we are not under any illusion that anything that we do will amount to the final solution, there is no such thing. It's something that we'll continue to work with. Just to give you one particular example, I think the existence of this inquiry is very useful as it engenders dialogue within the company and beyond the company and that is very useful and I would welcome it and that is part of the solution. Going back to some

issues you raised before we came on, I don't think the problems that you identified are new, they arose when we had video recorders and when children were able to record material late at night and watch it at six o'clock. It's a very very longstanding problem. That doesn't mean the problem isn't real, it's very very real and will become more so in due course. But the solution I believe is self-regulatory backed up by the threat of a regulation type process which is actually what were discussing here today.

Andrew Selous: You led me very nicely into my question. You talked about commitment and dialogue, both of which are very much welcome. I just want to ask Mr Landsman, my understanding is that Sky, BT, and Virgin Media were asked to come here today but are not here. I just find that a bit curious if they're as keen to engage as you say they are, and recognise the scale of the problem, and they say they don't want legislation, but they were asked to come today, do you know why they have not turned up?

Nicholas Landsman: Well I can't speak on their behalf...

Andrew Selous: You represent them don't you? You're from their Association?

Nicholas Landsman: I don't know about the detail about how they were asked...

Andrew Selous: Well, I'd think in the same way that Dido Harding and TalkTalk were...

Nicholas Landsman: Well, all I can say is I'm here and I'm happy to answer any questions you have. I can say that they have been working a lot behind the scenes on lots of work relating to this code that you might be aware of and that's talking

about enhancing what's currently being done, and the question earlier about what more can be done as it's not working and that's partly true. What we are trying to do now as an industry and those three companies that you have just mentioned are working hard behind the scenes to improve the way in which they provide software, making sure that it's for free and this important concept called Active Choice and it's still being worked on currently - it's still a work in progress. And the idea behind that is when someone contacts the ISPs who are part of the code, the representative will have to force the customer or the parents to make a choice about turning on their child safety controls and they will also be writing to existing customer to make sure they're also aware that those parent safety features are available and can be used and if necessary to help in terms of making sure they're on and working. So change is across the industry, it is certainly an enhancement to what is currently being done. Time is needed though for the industry to get that right. There are millions of customers using the internet and about I think about 20% of parents have actually turned on the controls so it's a long way to go and it will take a bit of time to make sure that happens but the reason I'm happy to come here and answer these questions because I think it is part of this ongoing dialogue that the industry needs to have with Parliament, with Government, and with other stakeholders which will continue.

Fiona Mactaggart: Helen.

Helen Goodman: I want to follow on from the point that Annette Brookes made about putting the parents in the prime position. If you take that as your paradigm, it suggests that the only children we're concerned about are those

children who have concerned parents and we're not concerned about the interests of other children. That cannot be the way that either industry, society, or Parliament can continue. I heard this morning of the excellent technology that you're developing at TalkTalk but I think, if I might say so, the road safety analogy is not terribly helpful from your point of view because after all we do have speed limits, we do have dangerous driving rules, and they are all enforceable by law. So if we want to use the road safety analogy fine, but there are rules on one side and good practice on another. The problem that we sitting here have is that you're constantly enjoining good practice on parents and saying "oh we don't want rules". And one reason I think people might be sceptical about the commitment of the industry is that the industry has had no difficulty in developing the technology for cookies, no difficulty in putting cookies on children's websites, which I would imagine most parents are completely unaware of, and therefore I can't quite understand why we can't have some parallel technology to the cookie technology to protect children. And in particular, it seems to me that there are some things that must be unacceptable to everybody. Everybody must find that those websites which encourage girls to stop eating, which is a real problem, nobody can possibly say that that is a reasonable choice, there must be a consensus about some of those things and I wonder whether the kind of legal framework that we have on gambling couldn't be extended to other particular areas.

Dido Harding: I used the road safety analogy knowingly. I think it is a good one and just as cars developed through the last hundred years, there will be more regulation. I know that might not be

something that every Internet Service Provider would agree with. But I think as a responsible citizen, we should expect there to be some degree of regulation over time. I think that it is too early to be mandating one technological solution or another in terms of how you filter the internet. Much though, it might serve my business if you chose one, I think that it is too soon. But we do need to be asking those questions, and I think you in the House should be asking those questions as to what the right point in time is to do that.

Helen Goodman: But we could mandate the standard that we expect and let you choose the technology. We could say everybody must filter the following things, they must do that, and you choose the technical fix that you'd like.

Dido Harding: Absolutely. I think the place that you really don't want to be in is Internet Service Providers making those decisions. So as we were going through the development for HomeSafe, we had to work very hard with the ICO to make sure that we could convince them at every stage that we weren't breaching our customer's privacy and that we weren't holding data that we shouldn't on what sites they were surfing. We thought long and hard about how we decided which types of sites you should block. We consulted a number of experts; we have an expert panel to help us with that. Because I don't think you want to be in a place where the ISPs are making those censorship-type decisions, I think it's very clearly a role for Parliament and Government.

Matt Lambert: I do think to a certain extent parents and responsible adults do have to take decisions about what is appropriate for their children. This is a

very complex area, there's a whole range of different access points for children, it's not just on their mobile phones, there's PCs, games consoles, all sorts of devices. And in the ideal world, one would be able to say that parents control all these devices and Microsoft is working towards that goal so that if you wanted to put family safety setting across all sorts of devices and control remotely, you could do that. You can do that at the moment but it's complex and difficult to put it into place. Parents do need to take some responsibility, businesses certainly have to take some responsibility - we absolutely accept that - and we have a big responsibility to our young consumers. But I think Government also has to take responsibility, with a point raised earlier, there's been some success for public information campaigns for example in Brazil which have raised awareness in this area and increased the level of safety for children in that country. So there are lessons that can be learned from around the world about ways in which things can be done differently.

Jo Swinson: My first question is about Active Choice which I think sounds very promising indeed, although I understand that it's not coming in until next October. But the big question I have is that it's going to be for new customers whereas the vast majority of people in this country are already online so how are they going to get an Active Choice? Or are they not?

Matt Lambert: Can I comment on that? That is complex for example like the PC, mobile phone or whatever, that is true. But one of the reasons we moved towards Windows Live Family Safety Settings is because we had them in the operating system in Windows Vista. While we had them in this operating system, the world changed, social networking came in and

our family safety did not cover social networking and enable parents and other types of responsible adults to control how long their kids were using certain sites or whether they were on Facebook or whatever when they were too young. So what we did is then introduce a free download so you can bring that into older versions of Windows PCs, put the family safety free onto your system, and control how long the children are on gaming sites, how long they play movies they're watching online, who they're talking to, controlling their friends and so forth. The only way you can keep up with technology I think is to do it in that way. That's our answer to that dilemma about how to get to people who already have PCs which are not protected, make it free, make it available online, and download it. But then again, it comes back to public information and public awareness, it's really difficult. We've been going to schools for several years now. We've seen in the last three years, thirty thousand children in schools and we also tell them how to keep themselves safe, tell the teachers how to guide them and tell them to protect themselves. We also make that available to parents, but at the same time, nearly every single one of those schools we've been to, we've offered through the school or through the parent association the opportunity for parents to come in and talk to some of our people from MSN to tell them how to keep themselves safe online. We've seen two thousand parents as opposed to thirty thousand children so it is difficult to get people engaged and to get through to them, obviously we all have busy lives, parents have a lot on, if you offer something in the evening, it's difficult for them to get to the school and do that. We need to get out there and talk to more people and explain to them what is available.

Jo Swinson: Arguably, the answer to the question throws up more, because when these new customers as of next October are given Active Choice, things will change. Does it not need to actually become something much like once a year you update your virus software, once a year there's that kind of thing that pops up and says these are the things that are currently available, make your choice?

Dido Harding: I think it's worth remembering that between 10% and 15% of people in the market move from one internet service provider to another each year, so it's not just people who aren't online. It's the commitment from the four ISPs is that any new customer we acquire by October 2012 will have to make an Active Choice, so it's not quite as dark as you were painting. But also again, I can only speak for myself rather than the other three ISPs but we actively want to have as many customers as possible using Active Choice, so I'm promoting it within my existing customer base because I think it will make them happier with TalkTalk. Because they tell me it's something that really matters to them. And having a simple and easy tool that they can control themselves will make them more likely to stay there. So I think that the market will drive us to be innovating to have simpler and better ways to do this.

Kip Meek: I'm just going to chip in, in representing one of the smaller ISPs, we are making McAfee software available for free to new customers but also letting our existing customers know this is happening. I am absolutely the last person to say we have got everything right, because we definitely haven't and there are lots of things people are doing on this table that we can learn from. Again the notion that we're ignoring the

existing customer base, as Dido said, that is not what's happening.

Andrea Leadsom: Yes, I just wanted to say actually, when we were first talking about holding this inquiry, a group of mums and dads who happen to be MPs all agreed we would move to TalkTalk on the basis of their HomeSafe so in terms of our little focus group, you had our vote Dido. But I'd just like to enforce what Helen Goodman was saying which is of course the reality is we're not dealing with concerned parents who would move heaven and earth to figure out how to switch on parental controls. We're dealing with the 30% of parents who either couldn't give a stuff or are absolutely IT unaware and it would just be beyond them to figure this one out. Just to go back to this car analogy that we seem to be using with such gusto, it's unthinkable that either a car manufacturer would sell a car without a seatbelt or indeed sell a car where the seatbelts were an option and you'd have to pay for them. And so I think if nothing else from this inquiry, what we should be leaving you with is these are seatbelts, these are not optional extras and you should all have one as standard and free, and it's not that you're doing anyone a favor, this is just basic road safety that if you can't get it right, then we will be left with no choice but to bring in something pretty draconian which you might not like, but if it's a failure to respond to that, then that's what Parliament will have to do.

Andrew Selous: I'd just like to come back to the point that Jo Swinson made about this sort of pop-up, I saw one for a digital switchover on my television a week or so ago. I really think you need to think very seriously about your existing customer base and it's excellent what you're doing

about the new ones but I think there is a real job of work to be done, particularly to reach that category which Helen and Andrea have properly talked about. Of course, concerned parents have a role, we all back concerned parents in taking an interest in these matters but there is a role for the protection of children per se here. A lot of children have irresponsible parents who aren't going to do this, and that's where you come in and where we come in. I really do think that point needs to be made.

Nicholas Landsman: I think there's already a commitment to contacting all existing customers regularly and informing them again about what's available. And of course that's important, as my colleague said, technology changes and consumer's attitudes changes. Also, if there were to be Government awareness then you'd find that that regular contact with existing customers, which is the point you're making, would hopefully echo and ensure that more carers and parents do use the services and products that are available.

Fiona Mactaggart: It has to be very easy to do is my complaint. Lots of them are not good for stupid people and I speak as a stupid person. I strongly feel the offer has to be an offer which fits the stupid person because if..you just have to be too clever, you're not going to do it, even if you care about it.

Matt Lambert: I agree, you have to make it as simple as you reasonably can. It isn't easy, it's complex. If you're trying to set it up on a PC for example, I have three children, all different ages, setting up the PC for them is not overly complex but it isn't easy. It's not a five minute job, it requires a good half an hour I did it the other day. I bought a new PC for my

family, I sat down and set up Windows Live family safe settings with different settings for each of my children and it doesn't take five minutes, because it's complex. It's simple and straightforward but you have to concentrate and follow through.

Fiona Mactaggart: Well if it takes you half an hour, I would never...

Helen Goodman: This is the real point; I must come back to this point. You're all able to put these cookies on the site, why aren't you able to do this? We don't have to do anything to get the cookies, you fix those up. Why can't you fix this up for us too?

Dido Harding: I think in part because the different choices our different customers would make, we can't make those choices for you. So one of the things that's been very interesting about HomeSafe is there's a lot of interest about pornography but actually self harming sites are being blocked more than pornography and I don't think we would have predicted that. You see some amusing patterns where parents are blocking dating but keeping pornography available, so they say "I don't mind if he's using porn but he's not going on that internet dating site". I think we do have to make the point Matt made earlier, I think parents and our customers have some responsibilities, we have to provide tools that are simple enough for people to make those choices but I don't think we can make all those choices for them.

Helen Goodman: Why can't we send you an email saying I would like excluded on all my kit: self-harm, pornography, whatever, and then you do it. So all we have to do is send an email why can't you do it like that?

Dido Harding: In my case, you certainly can.

Matt Lambert: What we're trying to do is we're trying to make it simpler. We work with the hardware manufacturers and retailers, and what we say to them is and what they're thinking about doing in response to Active Choice is making it much easier. You walk in and buy a PC as I did last Saturday and at the point of sales they ask 'do you want us to set up the parental safety filtering now at a high level' and you can then get them to set it up for age appropriate... you block the inappropriate content wholesale or you can decide to allow your 15 year old to see certain kinds of content, your 7 year old to see certain types of content, and your eleven year old to see different types of content. That's why it's so complex but we're trying to make it easier and I think at the point of sale is the most appropriate way to do that.

Jonny Shipp: There is an inherent complexity in the way its set up across the value chain. There are lots of different players. If you get your access you're getting it through the device, the network, there are a lot of different components. One of the things that's going on now at the European-level is trying to get lots of companies across the value chain together to address the issue and I think that's one of the important features facing the activities to say well how can the different components of the value chain work together to deliver child safety.

David Rutley: I see there's strength of opinion here. Helen and I were just comparing notes, we both have parents and mothers that happen to be Danish and I asked the question to the previous group are there international examples where people will be thinking about this longer

and harder than us in the UK, elsewhere in Europe for example. Also different parts of the states where there are particularly strong religious traditions or in the Middle East where there might be strong Muslim communities that have taken a very pro-active stance on this. Are there other models we could be looking at? Because we are wringing our hands saying “oh this is difficult and everything else”. But is this sold somewhere else?

Jonny Shipp: If you can define what it is with consensus that shouldn't be available, then actually it's not so difficult. We have a good model with the Internet Watch Foundation which depends on a very tight consensus around child abuse images which are blocked across all our networks. The difficulty is as soon as you move beyond a very specific area and there is a lot of argument about what it is that should and shouldn't be blocked.

David Rutley: There's a lot of talk about what's difficult, we all know it's difficult, there are choices to be made there is a plea around the table to make it simple for all the families in the UK. The question is and let me ask it again; Are there international models out there where it's worked, where people have come together and made some decisions about the choices that can be made and put into practice? Are we seeking to do something that's already across the world? We just need to do that because we don't know that.

Kip Meek: I'll give you my perspective on it. Speaking here as one of... I was Chairman of the European Regulators Group when I was at Ofcom. There is no answer, if you go around the world we'll find individual stories from which we can learn, but the way in which this is going to develop is through people collaborating

internationally. The Independent Mobile Classification Board is something that started here and was emulated elsewhere around the world. We started that. We need to take the lead internationally because the crux of this problem is even if everybody in the UK, all of the operators represented and not represented at this table, did it exactly right, you can still - by going to a site internationally get around some of the problems so this is not a UK problem and so how does one solve that issue? That issue has been dealt with before if you go back in history of telecommunications, the development of the ITU, all sorts of things have emerged from the gradual perception of a problem in one country and it's grappling with it internationally. That is what we need to do. This is not a two year or a five year or a ten year process, it's a twenty-five year process in which we can play a leading role.

David Rutley: Can I ask one more questions then and ask it a third time, I think you've answered it but it's like a yes or no at this point, the questions politicians like to ask but never answer. Are there any other countries where this has been done?

Kip Meek: No.

David Rutley: That's all we needed to know.

Matt Lambert: I think the UK's probably ahead. I'm on the UKCCIS executives so I'm working on those issues closely. I would say Reg Bailey's proposal of Active Choice is a clever, smart solution to the problem. If we get that operating, I think we can make a big difference.

Dido Harding: The one place you have this, but it's not an answer you'd want, is in China. So the technology is...

Fiona Mactaggart: We haven't yet got to the Chinese part.

Andrew Selous: Dido, just a point of information from you, when I met with some of your colleagues this year to talk about HomeSafe which I was very impressed with, you talked about various options of pornography, internet dating, self-harm which you said is the most popular option. One of the options was the ability to turn Facebook off while children are doing homework, which as a parent I would be quite keen on as far as my own children are concerned. I just wondered out of interest what sort of take out there had been for that particular option on Homesafe? Is that something you're aware of?

Dido Harding: I haven't got the figures in my head; I don't think we've got them. It's early days, in terms of order of priority, it would be a lot less understood at this stage than simply blocking different types of content. For everyone else, we have a functionality in HomeSafe called "homework time" so you can set for a couple of hours each day, either Monday to Friday or Monday to Sunday and it blocks social networking and gaming. Because if you're a teenager, you do need access to the internet but you don't need access to Facebook or whatever. At Facebook's request, we change the classification, because clearly it's not inappropriate content, it's just content that you may choose to block in the house at certain times of the week. So I think it's too early to say how popular it would be. In the focus groups in the research we did, actually teenagers themselves actually

quite liked it because it was very clear boundaries.

Andrew Selous: I would just really commend that because I think it is a real issue for both children and parents. I'm happy to give that a little of publicity I was very impressed when I saw that so thank you for that.

Matt Lambert: I don't want to get into a competition with TalkTalk but that's available in a Windows PC right now, the Windows Live Safety I was talking about. You can control right now how long your children spend on any application and on the Xbox you can control how long they can play games.

Andrew Selous: Can I ask, if I buy a new computer and it's got a Windows operating system, does a Windows Live Safety Box pop up in a clear and intelligible manner when I plug it and turn it on or I have to delve down and find it?

Matt Lambert: No it doesn't. It did in Vista and for the reasons I explained earlier, we moved to a different system, you need to download it. One of the reasons for that...

Andrew Selous: Can I respectfully suggest, representing all people who aren't as tecchie as younger people are, that it might be helpful if that was something that appeared quite obviously.

Matt Lambert: I understand that, but you'll also appreciate that Microsoft has particular rules about what we're allowed to bundle in, there are many other competitors in that market, McAfee, Symantec, many others, if we simply control that market for all PCs then there are others questions about how we're behaving in the market. Your point is well

made, what we're trying to do, as I said earlier, is work with retailers and with the hardware manufacturers and say do you want to load child safety and give parents the option when they buy a PC: ours is available free if they want to do without. So they can do Windows Live but they have complex relationships with many other of the companies that provide child safety parental software.

Mark Pewsey: Can I just ask those who have got products to manage access the difference between the user and the machine. You were speaking about those who have their own laptop about a fixed level on access of that particular machine. For family PCs where children of different ages where parents might be willing to give different level of access to...Can you do that? More importantly, how do you stop the 5 year old getting hold of the 15 year old's username and accessing that level of content if you have two different users?

Matt Lambert: That's a challenge for parents. I think the family safety PC is a good idea. It has been offered in the past, it didn't have huge take up, but it has been offered. Certainly, if there are retailers who want to offer a family safety PC we would certainly help them do that and we are actively talking to them about what they do and what they sell at Dixons, Tesco and the others.

Mark Pewsey: Dido, can you also have different levels?

Dido Harding: Ours is at the network level, so it's one set of settings for every device in the home. So, actually, the products that Matt is describing work very well with ours, so you could choose to block all pornography into your home but then set different settings on your

home PC for your teenage children versus your 5 year old, but knowing that a base level of all porn has been blocked into the home. So the two are complimentary - I know it sounds frustrating that we keep saying that there is no silver bullet. A number of these technologies are complimentary rather than either/or.

Kip Meek: Can I just say one point on this. Although we keep on repeating that, I don't think I noticed... Helen, if I may call you that, you look a bit depressed at this conversation, there are ways in which we can sequentially, progressively address these issues and that is what's happening. We shouldn't think of this as a total failure, it isn't a total failure, there are lots of things going in the industry which are progressively helping not to eliminate the problem but to reduce it to manageable levels and I definitely think we should be continuing...

Helen Goodman: I'm sorry, maybe I'm particularly stupid, but I haven't understood how I get this software or this kit or whatever it is, this filter thingy that you click or whatever without buying a new computer and I don't want to spend a thousand pounds just to have a filter. I just haven't understood what I do, and you've been talking to us and I've been in this room for half an hour.

Matt Lambert: You can download any number of parental control software for free...

Helen Goodman: But I don't know how to download parental controls. I can send an email, I can click onto Windows but the minute you talk about downloading software, my brain goes bzzzz.

Matt Lambert: Ok, I'm sorry I'm using a technical term, but if you go to search and

you ask for parental controls, you will find, whichever search engine you're using, you'll find any number of free options including ours.

Jonny Shipp: If you talk to your Service Provider, they'll help you, I think, mostly.

Helen Goodman: How do you talk to them?

Jonny Shipp: The service provider that provides your internet connection at home.

Helen Goodman: You mean you phone them up?

Jonny Shipp: Yes, or however you'd normally talk to them.

Helen Goodman: I don't normally talk to them very often.

Fiona Mactaggart: The point that Helen is rather effectively illustrating is the point that, this is the point I was trying to make about being stupid, about the fact that for this best to work, particularly when children are more technically aware than their parents, they know how to get around better than mum and dad, that actually there has to be something which is really simple and which kind of delivers itself to your door and I think that's where the cookie analogy...

Jonny Shipp: That's what we all want. We all want our products and services to be really easy just as customers want. It isn't that simple and there is not kind of silver bullet, that's been said.

Matt Lambert: Perhaps I overstated it earlier, I said it took me half an hour, let me just actually explain what happened. I went on to Windows Live Family Safety

Settings from a search engine; I really don't think that's terribly complex because people do search all the time. I did the search from my PC, I found the download site, it came and offered me a bunch of options. The reason it took me about half an hour is because I've got three children of different ages and I set them up with different access points. I don't want my 7 year old looking at the same things as the 15 year old so I had to control that. But if you just want the basic family safety, and I'm not just saying that from a Microsoft point of view, you could set that up in less than ten minutes and it's free. You could set it up in less than ten minutes. It could be simpler and I understand your frustration and I appreciate and share it sometimes, but we are trying to make it simpler, and it could perhaps be simpler and I'm not advocating responsibility for that, but it isn't totally complex to just to do that, just to set up Dido's system or our system or any of the other systems we have been talking about.

Dido Harding: There's a danger that we're comparing apples with oranges. So Matt's describing Microsoft software whereas what we're talking about is your phone broadband provider all making a commitment that by this time next year, every customer who chooses to join TalkTalk, Sky, BT, or Virgin will have to make a choice as they go through that sales process of whether they want content filtered in or out. It won't all be the same way, so in Talk Talk's case we'll be there long before next October, where every single new joiner will have to go through that process and it'll be very simple, as you're joining online or on the phone, click a couple of buttons to say this is what I want to filter out, I can't speak for my competitors on how they will do it, but they've signed up to be in that place

by next October. That will give you a basic, simple control of parental controls into your home. If you then want to get really sophisticated on an individual laptop, you can then use Microsoft software or any other number of providers. But I think there's a danger, we're getting drawn into the sophisticated, multi-user different platforms as opposed to what these four ISPs have been talking about in the last week.

Fiona Mactaggart: There's a question that's been lurking in the back of my head which is about the landscape rather than the solution which is about how much business is driven by the kinds of sites that we want parents to be able to block. How much money do those business makes in terms of use of broadband and so on?

Nicholas Landsman: Probably quite a lot. Obviously the internet is a vehicle that a lot of people will use to drive business in a lot of ways include the adult industry. I think we should be aware that a lot of the content you'll be concerned about is user generated, a lot of YouTube videos, a lot of photos on sites might also be the content that you don't want your children to see. We shouldn't see this in terms of bad business making money on the internet, there's a whole range of things and often things we're most concerned about. Social networking sites, chat rooms are the ones that have nothing to do with business and making money. It's just how the internet works and how we communicate and I think we have to be very mindful that children might be affected by pro-anorexia sites, by horrible conversations in chat rooms, by bullying online on social networking sites a whole range of things, and I think the industry have to work together with the

Government and schools on this and that is what we intend to do.

Dido Harding: It's so easy in these conversations because everyone cares passionately about it to think only about the bad that the internet can do. I am every bit as worried about the number of teenage children growing up in the UK who don't have access to the internet at all because you definitely can't do your homework and they don't all live in the Highlands or Islands. A lot of them live in areas where broadband is absolutely available. So we have to keep it in perspective that it is not all bad, it's actually quite the opposite, it's an increasingly an essential tool for a child.

Fiona Mactaggart: I think you've all been wonderful. Jo is bursting but people keep opening the doors, which means we've run out of time. Thanks very much to all of you. You've been patient, tolerant and informative and we're very grateful to you.

END.

This report was sponsored by:



in partnership with



For more information please contact:

Claire Perry MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Email: claire.perry.mp@parliament.uk
Tel: 0207 219 7050