Written evidence submitted by Chloe Lintern (BYC024)

1. Are particular groups of young people particularly prone to poor body image, or less likely to be offered or seek help with poor body image? What causes these trends?

I think that there is a lot of pressure on young people to fit into societies view of 'perfect'. Poor body image will affect people in different ways and trends will be different between different groups of people. I think women are viewed by society as being like 'models' which is being an unhealthy weight and having that 'clear perfect' skin. School often can promote poor body image in which young people are unhappy with as it can often have a strict uniform policy which doesn't allow you to wear what you feel comfortable wearing which can affect your body image.

2. In relation to young men and boys, minority ethnic groups, and those who self-identify as transgender: what are the specific challenges facing young people in these groups? How effective is existing support?

I think that body image affects young men and boys more than society talks about which means that it's not really spoken about or seen as a problem. I don't know about an existing support so cannot comment on whether it is effective or not.

3. Do existing campaigns and initiatives to promote positive body image sufficiently take into account the different challenges faced by young people with particular characteristics?

Campaigns are often targeted at society as a whole rather than groups of individuals. The only campaign I can think about was the one ran by Girl guiding UK which focused on body image of young females and I think that this targets the social media side of the problem with body image.

The internet, social media and messaging

4. Has the growing use of social media and communications platforms amongst young people encouraged practices and attitudes that entrench poor body image? What is the link between "sexting" and body dissatisfaction?

Social media plays a massive part of the idea of poor body image. It is so easy these days to screenshot a picture of someone and start shaming them in a group chat about how they look or are acting in the picture. I think that the number of 'likes' or 'favs' you get on social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter really does affect people's body image. If you get a lot of likes on a picture sometimes people can feel really happy with themselves but if you don't get a huge amount people can often feel down about themselves which is a huge part of social media. There is a link between sexting and body dissatisfaction and I feel the more confident you are with your body the more likely you are to sext with someone but saying that sometimes sexting can help people feel more confident about themselves.

5. Can the internet and social media be used as a tool to promote positive self-image? What examples are there of this happening?

As already stated social media plays a massive part in how people view themselves and this can have an impact upon positive self-image. It should be regulated to ensure that 'unhealthy' pictures aren't uploaded such as massively underweight models. I think sharing of picture from shops who use

unreasonable size maniquins shows how society is becoming more aware of how crazy some norms are towards others. Campaigns such as #LoveYourself should be used (this isn't an actual campaign just a random #) and this should show that it's ok to love yourself and that there is nothing to be ashamed off.

6. Do internet companies, social media platforms or other platforms have a responsibility to tackle trends which entrench poor body image? What are they already doing in this area? What more should they be doing?

I think social media platforms have a much bigger responsibility to run positive campaigning to talk about positive body image and that it is ok to love yourself and that there shouldn't be anything to be ashamed of. I think that more reporting should be done of pages and people who shame others for who they are/what they look like. I don't think that they are doing a lot in this area already and that they should be doing a lot more to help promote positive body image.

7. Does the Government have a responsibility to discourage the use of social media, the internet and communications platforms in ways which promote poor body image? What should it be doing in this regard?

I think that the government should have guidelines for social media sites about what they should be doing to promote a positive body image and how to combat negative comments/posts about negative body image.

Education

8. What examples are there of schools integrating the promotion of positive body image into school subjects across the curriculum, particularly physical education? How successful have these been? How can success best be measured?

Having spent a lot of my time at a girls school for sixth form, I felt like the environment towards each other was a lot more pleasant than the environment I spent myself around in a mixed school from 7-11. There was much more emphasis on creating a positive environment for the students to be who they wanted and that they should be able to play male dominated sports such as rugby if they wanted too. Success can be measured by the happiness rates of people and should not be measured through things such as exam pass rates .

9. What examples are there of youth organisations and peer education programmes outside of schools promoting positive body image? Are there examples of programmes focusing on different groups of young people? Are they focusing on different aspects of body image? How effective are these? How should they be evaluated?

The girl Guiding campaign on body image and self esteem is a campaign I can think of that works in this area. I think mental health charities and organisations also do a a lot of work promoting the idea of positive body image and that this is quite important to helping people develop positive mental health as well.

Health implications

10. To what extent is dissatisfaction with body image contributing to the increase in mental health problems amongst children and young people?

I think that having poor body image and being unhappy with yourself can really damage your mental health. If others are shaming you for your body image this again can be quite damaging towards yourself and this can change your opinion on yourself and the world. If someone comments a bad comment on a photo you have uploaded this can also be damaging to your mental health and have massive effects on how you view yourself.

11. Does the NHS have sufficient resources and expertise to manage mental health issues associated with poor body image? How have changes in education funding impacted on the ability of schools to provide in house mental health services?

The NHS is so underfunded already and waiting times for mental health services are really ridiculously long. This means that if you are suffering from mental health issues due to having poor body image you will b waiting a while to get help for your mental health. The changes in education funding and the cutting of things such as school nurses and councillors means that there is more pressure on external services to provide these services which are severely underfunded. If schools were funded better and all provided either a school nurse or councillor more can be done to help those with mental health problems.

12. Are schools sufficiently linked with health professionals? What more could be done in this regard?"

I don't think a lot is done to link health professionals with schools and feel that services are often kept separately and don't really work together. Schools which are massively underfunded could all work together to get on school nurse between two schools which would be more cost effective for the school and ensure that they have the support that the students need. Running a joint campaign across the country by 'big' youth organisations can be a positive start to ensuring everyone has positive body image.

June 2017