

## Written evidence submitted by Changing Faces (BYC027)

Dear Members of the Select Committee,

### Youth Select Committee Inquiry into Body Image

1. Changing Faces welcomes the Youth Select Committee's inquiry into body image, which it believes is a hugely important area of public policy concern, and it appreciates the opportunity to provide evidence.
2. Changing Faces was established in 1992 to help people who have a disfigurement find a way to live the lives they want. We are caring campaigners, providing one-to-one psychosocial support to children, young people and adults, and campaigning for social change and for face equality.
3. We use the word 'disfigurement' as it is a succinct general term, widely understood by the general public and enshrined in law in the Equality Act 2010 which gives legal protection to people with 'severe disfigurements'.
4. We use the word to mean any condition, mark or scar that affects the appearance of a person's face, hands or body. There are many causes of disfigurement some of which are present at birth such as birthmarks and cranio-facial conditions, but most are acquired during life including scarring from accidents, skin conditions like psoriasis and acne, facial and skin cancer, and after a stroke or Bell's palsy. Disfigurement can affect anyone from any social or demographic group and at any time in life.
5. In May, Changing Faces published *Disfigurement in the UK*, the result of the largest ever survey of people living in the UK who have a disfigurement. More than 800 people took part in the survey, including a significant number of children and young people. The report can be accessed at [www.changingfaces.org.uk/dituk](http://www.changingfaces.org.uk/dituk) and a copy is attached to this email.
6. Our answers to the questions in your call for evidence are based on the findings of *Disfigurement in the UK*, and also Changing Faces' work with children and young people over the last 25 years.
7. Appearance-related bullying is a significant problem in schools, and our research found that half of all children with a disfigurement experienced bullying at school. We found that four out of ten respondents to our survey said they felt their appearance affected how well they did at school, and 43% said it impacted on their ambition or aspiration to go to college or university. Our research found that having a disfigurement can lead to a lack of aspiration in many aspects of life; sadly it often starts in school.
8. Almost all respondents to our survey – 96% of them – had seen a photo, meme or other content on social media that mocked someone's appearance. One in ten had been the target themselves. Complaints to social media companies were to no avail: all complaints made by respondents to our survey were either dismissed or ignored by the social media companies concerned.
9. We [have called](#) on the new Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to convene a meeting with all social media companies and Changing Faces to discuss how we can tackle appearance-related abuse on social media, and await a response.
10. *Disfigurement in the UK* contains [30 recommendations](#) for government, public bodies and agencies, companies, schools and other sectors to tackle the prejudice and discrimination faced by people who have a disfigurement. We believe many of these recommendations will be applicable to the Select Committee's inquiry into body image.

11. In addition to our own research, Changing Faces commends to you recent research by Girlguiding (in particular the [Girls' Attitudes Survey](#)) and the Nuffield Council on Bioethics current project on [cosmetic procedures](#).

Changing Faces has a wealth of experience and evidence, together with a number of young people with personal experience of disfigurement whose testimony would add real value to the Committee's inquiry. We would be delighted to provide oral evidence, or further written evidence on any of the points above.

Finally, we congratulate you on taking on this important issue and we look forward to seeing the outcome of the Committee's inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Henrietta Spalding  
Head of Advocacy

*June 2017*