

## **Written evidence submitted by Paul Milton (BYC019)**

When looking at the issue of body image we need to take into account the context of the wider and bigger picture, the social and economic pressures on people today to understand why they may be obese, or underweight, or obsessed with their body image. Obesity and various other eating disorders are a problem for a lot of people but to solve one of the key issues and problems we only have to look to the supermarket shelves and the prices we are charging for food. Whilst healthy food prices are going up like most food prices, lower quality food is getting cheaper but also more affordable to buy.

"I spoke to a gentleman recently classified disabled, overweight, and dieting, trying to lose weight, he wanted to buy the healthier food but was struggling to pay bills."

### **Inequality In Finance And The Effect's On Buying Healthy Food Connected To Body Image: -**

Whilst some people may have felt the pinch or subsequent financial crisis, some may have not, a lot of current health problems and pressures on our NHS system stem from inequality of pay across public and private sectors. The not so well off, single parents, or disabled, simply won't have the budget to buy the best healthiest food. I speak regularly to shoppers gasping at the price of food or how packaging has shrunk but the price has stayed the same, how they shop around for bargains to save money on fuel and food a lot of other factors contribute to how someone may or may not look or the pressures to look good. Psychology also needs to be taken into account especially certain ethnic groups, which pride themselves on appearance for example traveller families, and groups pride themselves on their appearance. In terms of psychology a person may be poor but they may want to keep up their appearance to look smart, their house may be ramshackled derelict but it doesn't mean they don't have to look smart, there's always reasons for keeping up appearances and the status quo.

### **Fitness and Body Image: -**

There are always and most commonly often reasons why someone turns to fitness or the gym or are highly focussed on their image.

### **My Fitness Story: -**

I am regular gym visitor and fitness fanatic myself, I go to the gym every day without fail about 2-3 hours a day, I take a variety of supplements, I watch what I eat, when I eat, I want to stay in shape keep my youth and physical stamina.

In the career, I am in and with modern life and the pressures, facing our society I need to stay in shape as appearance is everything but the demand and pressure to keep in shape is great as well. My choice for keeping in shape or as much as I can is a mixture of health benefits having epilepsy and undiagnosed Autism or spectrum disorder and chilling out and taking out the stresses of the week in the gym. I find fitness but doing fitness beneficial it calms me down and keeps me mellow. One of the side effects of my epilepsy medication I get hunger cravings so I have to watch what I eat and try to be as healthy as possible.

I take a variety of supplements diet protein powders various tablets L'Arginine, L'Carnatine, CLA etc. as well as various others. Each supplement I take I look into the makeup, what the product does, what it benefits, I test and trial out everything I consume in terms of fitness finding out what works and what doesn't. There's a science to fitness and a lot of people who don't do fitness or see these models posing in shape don't really realise the time and effort and passion and dedication they put into looking good but also maintaining their peak performance. I only understand my self-doing

fitness for so long the dedication and diet and life style changes you have to make to get the results and that your body goals have to be realistic to your life style and age.

### **Reasons Why People Turn To Fitness:**

Through my journey I've met many different people it's amazing who you meet in the gym and if you get talking you get to understand why they are there.

Recently I met a couple in the gym who couldn't have children both were very gutted at the news, they had a happy relationship but were down at the thought they couldn't have children so they both decided to get in shape and go to the gym. I got talking to them I tried to emphasise that going to the gym being at the gym and not addressing their "Issue" of "That loss" within their relationship wasn't going to solve the problem and issue, "That's why I say everybody has a reason why they are at the gym."

### **Societal Pressures: -**

The pressure of body image effects a wide variety of groups everybody in the gym is different their stories different and reasons different it's how you handle the pressures society put's on you which is the key to body image and mental wellbeing.

There are a lot of pressures and people emphasising what you should eat drink and even wear but again it's how you handle the pressure and how strong of mind you are. The question posed also needs to take into account the pressures within the gym and fitness societies approach to certain groups be it people with disabilities, LGBT, ethnic minority groups even people that are just a little bit different, it could be even due to bullying or peer pressure to why someone would worry about their body image or feel the pressure to worry about their body image so much.

Locally I know a gentleman in his 60's -70's lost a lot of weight, "We look at losing weight as a good thing but is it social conformity or the classification of what is normal." He lost the weight and was left with excess now having it cut off costing £10000 again that excess weight fat left it's a fine line between aesthetic psychological and actual health needs and requirements.

We are keen to think certain communities or groups will support fellow people from the same group, the town I come from the gym I go to its quite cliquy, it's more the subversive undertones which are the most damaging in terms of body image and people's well being.

Naturally in nature we pick on the weak and different it's natural selection "We just have to look at news recently in regards to the young lad you was bullied for being smart" the gym is similar combined with the lack of genuine caring and the obsession for money and business out of fitness as result people in need who shouldn't be at the gym get over looked not approached or simply disregarded.

### **Class and Body Image: -**

Different areas of society have different access to funding and income thus prioritising money on the immaterial will differ between higher class and lower class people.

### **Accessing the Help if Needed: -**

In my gym journey and in my work environment and role as an ambassador I have tried to help various people where I can, some people it's obvious why they shouldn't be in the gym or need help with their health. We have a number of issues facing our NHS system if a few of these issues were addressed it would make addressing the health needs of people with body image issues a lot easier. The simplest which is fixable is actually caring about one another looking out for one another a simple thing which is getting overlooked in today's society.

We have still yet to feel the full extent of Brexit and what it will do to the labour market and what will happen to immigration and border control all these factors will have a key role in the future of our NHS system and whether it will be able to cope with the health need's associated with body image.

In the past I have tried to help people with eating disorder's or get them help, this sector like many other needs' more support, and more backing and more awareness.

When looking at accessing to health needs for people associated with body image you need to also take into account the local political environment because it affects the access to this help. If an area has a political hierarchy to the area or structure base approval has to come from somewhere else before it's trickled on, "The yes of no" if help is available from various bodies eventually making its way to the person in need.

### **Social Media and Internet and regulating the internet: -**

We also just need to look at TV and other social media platforms to see the pressures we have put on people literally everywhere, every part of life, and every part of the body. It's associated with the labelling of normal and what is normal. "I was laughing to myself the other day I was walking past this girl in the street who was waiting for a gas man, as I was approaching her I was thinking in my head act normal. As I was walking off I was laughing to myself what a stupid thing to think for someone who's epileptic, dyslexic, a little bit autistic, "Act normal" it still makes me laugh :). This bracketing of what is perfection and pressure to conform having bits cut off us because we want to look sexy or appealing to our other halves, it's a bit of weird twisted world, whilst some people hate fat some people literally love it and worship it and find it sexy.

### **Regulating The Internet: -**

The main problem with the internet it wasn't originally intended for what we know of the internet today it was originally meant for science and easy exchange of knowledge between dr's and professors and scientists it's simply grown beyond its parameter's out of control and too big to regulate.

As soon as someone fixes something, someone finds a hack or backdoor so posing the question of regulating social media and other platforms won't be easy it's not that it's not achievable but a big big vast project. The problem is it borders on human rights and freedoms of expressions then censorship as well.

One of the main problems with the internet and internet providers a lot of the companies are untouchable and bigger than the government itself and generally don't answer to anyone.

The future of the internet isn't so much the internet it's self but the universality of technology, which also curves and goes along side the economic changes. The focus needs to be focussed on server security and the dark web changing human rights laws to suit isn't the answer it's tackling bringing these social media giants to account.

During the election campaign, certain parties were able with quite ease to put ads online aimed at deformation of rival parties and leaders, if they can do this with so much ease why can't they focus on tackling the extremism and other negative factors online?

### **Online Dating/Sexting: -**

The worst pressure in terms of body image and the internet I think is in the dating scene and online dating crossing over into the area of sexting. I've looked into online dating sadly it's not for me, I find the accessibility difficult also being a bit little autistic "Not diagnosed" I find the emotional side very difficult, I prefer meeting people and talking to them face to face as you know where you stand. The pressure for men and women it's the pressure to look good and in terms of sex as well the pressure for certain parts of the body especially for men how big and how much stamina etc most of which in

the end is actually psychologically based. It also depends on where you work your everyday environment this will also have a big impact on a person in regards to their grooming processes and pressure to look good. Natural selective competition, similar to Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and mating "Natural selection".

#### **Employment Pressures' Connected to body image: -**

With the high demand for job roles, it has put an even higher demand on people to make sure they look young but also in shape for job interviews and positions. In addition, the inequality in the health care system has also put pressure on disabled people to keep in shape as well, or to keep as healthy as possible as the simplest of things such as seeing your own doctor is not easy.

#### **Summary: -**

I usually justify or reinforce my points whilst researching into topics and subject's is most sources were out of date, or had not been updated in a couple of months. One source had actually changed topic despite stating they focused on the area of body image, they had actually changed over to promoting writing techniques for essays, which seemed very strange. I have looked at the area of body image and health for this sector before and it has always seemed an area where it has lacked proper backing and support or not considered so important compared to other subjects.

#### **Statistics:-**

**Child line 2015/2016 stated they received 1596 contacts from girls worried about their body image.**

**17% increase on previous years. Average age group 12-15 most worried and concerned about their image.77 went on to need counselling.**

A majority of the sources when looking into this subject, or any subject where a person needs help, or support, point you in the direction or another organisation to help. Addressing body image is joint problem and effort, a combination of good parenting, good social and medical care, good GP and doctor, Councillor Psychotherapist, and local care provider depending on route.

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