

# The Commission for Countering Extremism

End of Year Report, 2021-2022

March 2022

# Foreword

It was a great honour to be appointed the Interim Commissioner at the Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) in March 2021.

Extremism is a scourge on our society and the challenges it poses are great: communities divided, viewing each other with mutual suspicion and hatred. A rejection of democratic values and principles. A mindset that justifies or leads to hate crime or terrorism.

My time in office has reinforced my belief that the CCE is uniquely placed to assist government in providing a robust response to extremism in all its forms.

Since being appointed, I have provided advice to the government on the future structure and function of the Commission.

In doing so, I engaged with Ministers, policy officials, law enforcement, intelligence, prison governors, and regulatory bodies. I wanted a clear understanding of the issues they face while addressing extremism – whether that is online, in schools, prisons, charities, or elsewhere – and to look at the knowledge base on extremism, including with those who have front-line operational roles.

That engagement helped me better understand why there is such a need to increase the awareness of extremism across the public sector and the challenges government faces around engagement, particularly with groups where there is an extremism concern.



I was therefore pleased that the Home Secretary shared my vision of a permanent Commissioner-led body that can provide independent advice and expertise to government.

However, the CCE cannot only be government facing. Coming from a think-tank background, I am aware of the expertise that exists outside government. That is why we continue to engage with think-tanks, civil society groups, and academics, to understand how best to harness fresh and innovative external thinking around counter-extremism.

The CCE's Academic Practitioner Counter Extremism Network (APCEN) plays a vital role here, helping connect practitioners with leading academics specialising in the study of extremism. I am pleased that APCEN's membership has grown in the past 12 months and I am considering how best to utilise APCEN's expertise and knowledge in the future.

There is much to do. The extremism landscape is dynamic and evolving.

However, the challenges it presents are consistent. We will do all we can to ensure the CCE is at the forefront of addressing them.



**Robin Simcox**  
**Interim Commissioner for Countering Extremism**

# Activities over the last 12 months

Robin Simcox was appointed as Interim Commissioner for Countering Extremism in March 2021. This appointment was made for an initial six month period, following the conclusion of Dame Sara Khan DBE's three-year tenure as Commissioner.



The important work of the Commission for Countering Extremism will continue, and I'm delighted Robin Simcox will bring his expertise and innovative thinking to this role."

Baroness Williams of Trafford,  
Minister for Countering Extremism  
March 2021<sup>1</sup>

The objectives, as set out by the Home Secretary for the Interim Commissioner, required Robin to work across government and with external partners in England and Wales.

Since March 2021, this work has included providing advice to the Home Secretary on the future structure and function of the Commission, raising awareness around extremism in all its forms across the public sector, and considering how best public bodies can be supported in their efforts to disrupt those who seek to sow division in our communities. The Commission has also worked closely with Home Office and other government departments, to support better understanding of extremism across a range of ideologies and behaviours, helping shape policy and advice on departmental counter extremism work.

<sup>1</sup> Commission for Countering Extremism. 2021. Robin Simcox appointed as Interim Lead of Commission for Countering Extremism (accessed: 17 March 2022)  
<<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/robin-simcox-appointed-as-interim-lead-of-commission-for-countering-extremism>>

Robin Simcox meets representatives from the Ahmadiyya Muslim community

October 2021



Part of the Commission's remit requires engagement across the counter extremism sector. In carrying out this work, the Commission has engaged widely across government, regulatory bodies, and law enforcement over the last twelve months. A full list of our engagements can be found at Annex B.

Through this engagement, the Commission has sought to better understand the issues faced in identifying and combatting extremism, and how best we can develop our shared knowledge on extremism. These conversations have highlighted to us the dedication and passion for counter extremism work that exists across the public sector, as well as the continued need for a permanent and independent Commissioner-led body on extremism.



My time as Interim Commissioner for Countering Extremism so far has only served to reinforce my belief that a robust governmental response to extremism is necessary. I have been very heartened to see such Ministerial enthusiasm for the role of the Commission in helping to shape this response, and such willingness across government to harness the Commission's expertise."

Robin Simcox, Interim Commissioner for Countering Extremism  
October 2021

Over the last 12 months, the Commission has continued to grow its Academic and Practitioner Counter Extremism Network (APCEN), which was set up in October 2020. The Network brings together leading academics with policy officials and practitioners from the counter extremism sector. APCEN works to identify knowledge gaps, share new and emerging trends and research, and facilitate collaborative working and projects between members. APCEN significantly enhances the CCE's ability to provide expert advice and knowledge to government around extremism in England and Wales.



“Keeping our country safe and secure is the first duty of the government. The Commission for Countering Extremism holds a vital role in our national security...Your work is challenging. Your work makes a difference, both at home and abroad.”

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, Home Secretary  
February 2022

In February 2022, the Commission hosted the first CCE Conference, bringing together government policy officials, academics, and public sector practitioners to consider how extremism manifests itself in the UK today and how best the sector should be responding. Panels included in-depth conversations on online harms, children and education, and prisons.

As an independent, arms-length body of the Home Office, our budget and spending is negotiated with the Home Office and is subject to Home Office finance policy and HM Treasury rules, including value for public money, and follow systems and processes for HR and procurement. The Commission's budget allocation and expenditure is in Annex A.

The Commission also recognises the importance of transparency. While we are not covered by the Freedom of Information ('FOI') Act, to support transparency in our work we respond to all appropriate requests that come direct to us, or via the Home Office. The Commission received seven FOI requests over the last 12 months and responded to all of them.



Robin Simcox takes part in a panel discussion on terrorism and extremism alongside Lord Carlile of Berriew CBE QC and Sir Alex Younger

September 2021

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, Home Secretary, speaks at the CCE Conference

February 2022





## April 2021

Robin Simcox starts in-post as Interim Commissioner, immediately beginning engagement with key stakeholders, both in and outside of government.

## May 2021

Robin presents his vision for the CCE to **Munira Mirza, then Director of the No 10 Policy Unit**, outlining his views on future government policy and the issues currently being faced by counter extremism practitioners.

Robin continues his engagement across the sector. Meetings include **Counter-Terrorism Policing**, and **William Shawcross, Independent Reviewer of Prevent**.

## June 2021

Robin meets with **Baroness Williams of Trafford, Minister of State**, to outline his priorities and future vision for the Commission.

Robin posts his first [online CCE blog](#) as Interim Commissioner.

## July 2021

Robin's engagement across the sector includes visits to **HMP Wandsworth and HMP Belmarsh**. Meetings include the **Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group, Antisemitism Policy Trust**, and several leading academics.

## August 2021

Robin meets **Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, Home Secretary** to deliver advice and insights on key issues and challenges for government in countering extremism.

## September 2021

Robin takes part in a **panel discussion on terrorism and extremism alongside Lord Carlile of Berriew CBE QC and Sir Alex Younger**, as part of CEG's Young Leaders in National Security Fellowship.



## October 2021

Robin meets representatives from the **Ahmadiyya Muslim Community** and discusses extremism faced by the community, during a tour of the Baitul Futuh Mosque.

## November 2021

Robin delivers a speech on the work of the Commission and its aims to the **University of Salford**.

The Commission's **Academic and Practitioner Counter Extremism Network** marks the end of its successful twelve month pilot phase.

Robin meets **Damien Hinds MP, Minister for Security**, to discuss extremist threats and express the urgent need for a robust response to extremism.

Robin posts his [second CCE blog](#), reflecting on his first six months in post.

## December 2021

Alongside advisory engagement with policy officials, Robin continues to engage academics across the country, to better harness **innovation and insights from academia and think tanks**. Themes discussed include the Far Right and the effectiveness of laws around proscription.

## January 2022

The Commission attend and feed into **several cross-government roundtables and advisory meetings**.

Robin receives presentations on **Salafism and alt-right online subcultures**.

## February 2022

The Commission hosts its first ever **panel event**, bringing the Home Secretary, senior policy officials, academics and practitioners together to share knowledge and insights.

# Annex A – Commission finances (2021-2022)

The Commission’s budget for Financial Year 2021/22 is £1,000,000 per annum. This is in line with (HMT) Guidance on Managing Public Money (the consent for our expenditure was based on HMT consent under the guidance in Box 2.6),<sup>2</sup> and agreement from the Home Office.

Up to the end of January 2022, the Commission has spent £402,598.22.

The Financial end of year forecast for 2021/22 is c£846,000. This includes pay and non-pay, CCE projects, legal fees, IT and accommodation, and £300k underspend accrued due to delays in staff recruitment returned to Home Office Finance on 21/01/22.

<b>Total budget</b>	£1,000,000
<b>Expenditure up to end January 2022</b>	£402,598.22
<b>Pay</b>	£386,486.89
<b>Non-Pay (Includes: IT &amp; Accommodation, CCE projects, Staff Learning &amp; Development, and Staff Travel and Subsistence)</b>	£18,111.33
<b>Forecasted spend February and March (Pay and Non-Pay)</b>	c£146,000
<b>Returned Underspend</b>	£300,000
<b>Financial End of Year Forecast 2021/22</b>	c£846,000

Robin Simcox claimed £62.93 in expenses from April 2021 to the end of February 2022.

<sup>2</sup> HM Treasury. 2019. Managing public money. [accessed: 18 March 2021] <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/742188/Managing\\_Public\\_Money\\_\\_MPM\\_\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/742188/Managing_Public_Money__MPM__2018.pdf)>

# Annex B – Interim Commissioner Engagement

(April 2021 – March 2022)

To respect data protection requirements, organisations' names are listed rather than academics.

The Interim Commissioner's engagement includes one-to-one meetings, workshops, conferences, and group discussions.

## Central Government, Regulators, and Law Enforcement

- No.10
- Home Office
- Security Services
- Ofsted
- Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office
- HM Prisons and Probations Service
- Department for Education
- Hate Crime Policing
- Ofcom
- Counter Terrorism Policing
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport
- Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group
- Charity Commission
- Independent Press Standards Office

## Other Public Sector

- Lord Carlile of Berriew CBE QC
- HMP Wandsworth
- HMP Belmarsh
- Local Government Authority
- The Prime Minister's Independent Advisor on Social Cohesion & Resilience
- The Independent Reviewer of Prevent
- The Independent Faith Engagement Advisor
- The Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation
  
- **Politicians**
- The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP (as Secretary of State for the Home Department)
- Damian Hinds MP (as Minister of State for Security and Borders)
- Baroness Williams of Trafford (as Minister of State Home Office)
- Jane Hutt MS (as Minister for Social Justice, Wales)

## Academics, Experts and Thinktanks

- University College London
- Coventry University
- University of Salford
- Anglia Ruskin University
- Kings College London
- Swansea University
- University of Huddersfield
- Brunel University
- University of Birmingham
- University of Kent
- Tech Against Terrorism
- CREST Advisory
- Centre for Countering Digital Hate
- Moonshot
- Unity Initiative
- APCEN
- Public.IO
- Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right
- Veritable Analytics
- REOC Communications
- Policy Exchange
- Institute for Strategic Dialogue
- Counter Extremism Group
- Sir Mark Rowley

## Civil Society

- Nahamu
- Index on Censorship
- English PEN
- National Secular Society
- Community Security Trust
- Peter Tatchell Foundation
- Southall Black Sisters
- Baitul Futuh Mosque
- Resilience in Unity Project
- Antisemitism Policy Trust
- Tell MAMA
- Faith Matters

## International

- US Embassy
- French Embassy
- Austrian Government's Observatory on Political Islam
- Washington Institute for Near East Policy
- University of Oslo
- Princeton University

