

Challenging Hateful Extremism

Summary Version

Our Vision for Countering Hateful Extremism

Our vision is one where together we uphold our democratic way of life in a peaceful, plural and inclusive society that opposes intolerance;

where people exercise individual liberty and take personal responsibility for promoting equal citizenship, recognising the harm extremist behaviours cause to everyone;

and where our communities and institutions robustly challenge and resist hateful extremism and support those affected by it.

Foreword from the Lead Commissioner

Hateful extremism demands a response. From inspiring terrorist attacks, to hateful extremist groups engaging in persistent hostility, we are grappling with a global challenge.

However, extremism, and how we counter it, is a complex and contested policy area. The debate is often polarised and abusive; not helped by an overuse of the E-word.

I have worked in the field of counter-extremism for over ten years. It is demanding work and there's little support. I also know how it feels to be a victim, targeted by extremists.

In 2015 the Government launched the first ever Counter Extremism Strategy. It is my view that this is insufficient and too broad. If we are to be successful in reducing the extremist threat in our country, we must focus on challenging hateful extremism.

Counter extremism policy to date has been characterised by a top-down approach. I have invested in extensive engagement to hear the voices of the wider public, victims and counter extremism practitioners that have been missing.

What I heard was informative, shocking and worrying. Some of the stories have left me heartbroken. People, young and old, have cried as they described how extremists targeted them.

We must not allow extremists to normalise their deep-seated hatred in our country.

Extremism is a human rights issue. Time and again I have seen how extremist activity has contributed to a climate of censorship and fear; limiting expression, religion and belief; and undermining the universality and indivisibility of human rights.

From my background in human rights I also recognise the concern that countering extremism could undermine freedom of expression.

So in this report I propose a new approach to counter extremism. A rights-based and proportionate response to ensure that checks and balances are in place when countering extremism. One that builds on our country's long tradition from Magna Carta to the Human Rights Act.

I want to see a strengthened Commission for Countering Extremism to drive the response we need and to help defend our plural, tolerant and broad-minded society.

We need brave, bold and consistent leadership both within Government and across civil society. We need to see our existing laws applied consistently too.

Together, we must build a whole society response to help those who are vulnerable to extremism while challenging those who actively seek to divide and undermine our country.

Sara Khan
Lead Commissioner

Who we are

The independent Commission for Countering Extremism was established in March 2018 to support society to challenge all forms of extremism and provide impartial advice to the Government on new policies, including the need for new powers.

This is a summary of the Commission for Countering Extremism's first full report. It contains the key conclusions and recommendations that we have drawn from all the evidence we have gathered.

The Commission consists of a small secretariat, led by Lead Commissioner Sara Khan and the ethos of our work is engagement, impartiality and evidence.

This report was commissioned by the Government of the United Kingdom and covers England and Wales. There will be further conversations following publication with the Welsh Government as to how it can be used in a Welsh context.

Engagement

Engaging widely and with all perspectives is at the core of our work. A full breakdown of the groups the Commission has engaged with is available on our website..

Impartiality

As an independent, non-statutory expert committee of the Home Office, we have agreed a charter with the Home Office which put in writing our ability to work transparently and independently of government.¹ We are free to determine our own methodologies and the content of our reports, recommendations and public statements.

Evidence

We are committed to an evidence-based approach. We have gathered evidence from the public, victims, academia, experts, practitioners and government. Much of this evidence is available in our full report and the supporting information that has accompanied it. These are available on our website.

¹ GOV.UK, 2018, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charter-for-the-commission-for-countering-extremism>

TOP FINDINGS ABOUT EXTREMISM

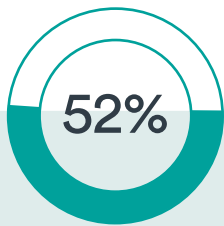
73%

of people are concerned about rising **extremism**



2018

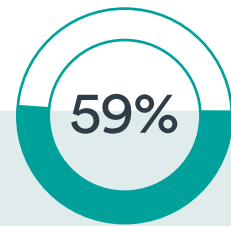
saw the biggest **Far Right** marches in a generation.



52% of the respondents to a first-of-its kind call for evidence have witnessed extremism in some way.

75%

Three quarters of the public respondents find the Government's current definition of extremism



Of the public respondents who said they had witnessed extremism, Islamist extremism (59%) was the most common



56% of the public and 73% of practitioners agreed that "a lot more" should be done to counter extremism online.

"**very unhelpful**" or "**unhelpful**"



of those countering extremism face some degree of **abuse** for the work they do.

Prosecutions for inciting hatred are as high as they have ever been since statistics first began in 2010. Recorded religious hate crime has increased over twice as fast as other forms since 2015.

When asked who has a role to play, practitioner respondents' top choice was **social media**, **tech companies** and the public respondents chose **faith groups** and **leaders**.

Executive summary

Hateful extremism threatens our ability to live well together. From inspiring violence to the incitement of active hatred and hostility targeted at those perceived to be a threat to their world-view, hateful extremists are having a devastating impact on victims and threatening the social fabric of our country.

Extremism requires an urgent and effective response. Our country response to violent extremism and terrorism is robust and effective. However violent extremism requires a different strategy to hateful extremism. Our evidence shows that a significant gap exists in our response to hateful extremism.

Our ability to counter extremism outside of terrorism has been hampered by a lack of consensus: on what we mean by extremism, on what our response should look like and on what role government and civil society should play.

Launched last year, the Commission has held the most extensive national conversation on extremism.

The Commission has met thousands of people including those critical of counter extremism (CE). We received nearly 3000 submissions to our first ever public consultation, visited over 20 towns and cities, held 16 roundtables, reviewed hundreds of pages of Government documents and commissioned 19 academic papers.

Drawing on this wide range of evidence and having reviewed the Government's Counter-Extremism Strategy and definition of 2015, this report proposes a bold new approach focussed on hateful extremism. We need to develop a set of diverse yet robust and proportionate responses to it.

At the same time, protecting democratic debate and freedom of expression is vital. This includes defending speech and actions which can be offensive, shocking, dissenting and critical; or advocate for conservative religious beliefs for example. This is why we are taking a rights-based approach to challenging hateful extremism.

Describing Hateful Extremism

The experiences of the public, victims and front-line counter-extremists has often been missing from the debate; yet it is their voices which are vital in shaping counter-extremism policy. We heard moving stories from victims and from all kinds of people and places about the serious and long-lasting harms of extremism. We have identified these harms for the first time, which will enable further research.

Many people are affected – over half of respondents to our public consultation had witnessed extremism, with one in five having witnessed it in their local area. Extremism is not confined to a single race, religion or ideology. Concerns were raised about the growing threat of the Far Right,

Far Left, Islamist and other forms of religious fundamentalisms; and animal rights extremism.

The concerns people told us about that are harmful and lie outside democratic debate fall into three categories: terrorism and violent extremism, hateful extremism and the restriction of rights and freedoms.

It is our view that across this spectrum, countering hateful extremism requires the greatest attention and focus if we are to be successful in reducing the extremist threat. While some good work is currently being undertaken the current response to hateful extremism, unlike terrorism and violent extremism, is in our view insufficient.

Our research proposes that hateful extremism consists of a framework of behaviours, beliefs and harms. It stands in stark contrast to pluralism and Britain's human rights, and equality laws and norms.

Our summary of hateful extremism is:

- Behaviours that can incite and amplify hate, or engage in persistent hatred, or equivocate about and make the moral case for violence;
- And that draw on hateful, hostile or supremacist beliefs directed at an out-group who are perceived as a threat to the wellbeing, survival or success of an in-group;
- And that cause, or are likely to cause, harm to individuals, communities or wider society.

What Does Hateful Extremism Look Like

Hateful, hostile and supremacist beliefs are increasingly visible in our country today. The Far Right's narratives of a racial or cultural

threat to "natives" from "aliens" have been making their way into the mainstream. As are Islamists ideas for defending a single politicised and communal Muslim identity against the West's corrupting influence. And the Far Left's conflation of anti-imperialism and antisemitism.

Surveys show the public view Muslims negatively and as a distinctly different group, and that up to a third hold at least one antisemitic view. As we are clear, beliefs on their own are not hateful extremism. Hateful behaviours drawing on these beliefs that may cause harm, especially to others, are.

Prosecutions for inciting hatred are as high as they have ever been since statistics first began in 2010. All the convictions for stirring up hatred last year included an anti-Muslim component. Recorded religious hate crime has increased over twice as fast as other forms since 2015.

We are aware of at least seven convictions of members or ex-members of National Action for inciting racial hatred, with most of the offences being committed after proscription. Far Right agitators convince their supporters that instead of amplifying hatred they are merely "telling the truth" about Muslims. Anti-Muslim Far Right and Sikh activists have worked together to promote narratives about the threat Muslims pose to non-Muslim women. While at the same time Islamists are telling Muslims that they should not associate with "worse than animals" non-Muslims.

And these messages reach large audiences. Far Right agitators' videos on social media can receive over half a million views. Up to four thousand people attend rallies headlined by Far Right leaders.

The persistent hatred directed at individual members of these hated groups is becoming more obvious. We heard harrowing tales of abuse levelled at Jewish

MPs – in a country where at least 170,000 antisemitic web searches are made every year. Ahmadi Muslim children are abused at school, and a British Urdu newspaper printed encouragement for a boycott of Ahmadi business, because of their faith. Farmers are targeted for filling our plates. And even those who seek to bring communities together are targeted to reinforce messages of separation between Jews and Muslims.

Alongside these are those who equivocate or make a moral case for violence, including failing to condemn violence against minorities or women. One of CAGE's senior leaders describing suicide bombing as "a price worth paying". National Action tweeted after Jo Cox's murder "only 649 to go".

Victims and practitioners told us about hundreds of harms. From how their communities are driven apart. How victims suffer violence and harassment at the hands of extremists for expressing their own beliefs. Counter extremists themselves told us how intimidation and abuse was having a chilling effect on their willingness to speak out, as well as on their mental health and well-being. We have heard how basic freedoms, our democracy and the economic prosperity of businesses and towns are impacted.

But hateful extremism doesn't happen in isolation. As our case studies show, hateful extremists exploit local, democratic tensions or promote the restriction of others' rights and freedoms. It is important to be clear about the behaviours we are dealing with when countering hateful extremism and the tools we are using to tackle them.

Taking A Rights-Based Approach To Countering Hateful Extremism

We propose taking a rights-based approach to counter extremism which

balances competing rights and ensures a proportionate response. Previous attempts to introduce CE legislation in 2015 failed because they did not do this.

So far, there has been little discussion of the victims of extremism and their experiences; how extremists target them and the resulting abuse, harassment and denigration of their rights. This affected their families and had a chilling effect on their willingness to speak out. A victim centred approach needs to be part and parcel of any counter extremism strategy.

Human rights law explicitly prevents totalitarian, extremist groups from exploiting human rights to weaken the very ideals and values of a democratic society. Existing legislation captures some hateful extremist behaviours, such as incitement to racial and religious hatred.

We have not yet heard a strong case for more powers to counter extremism. But we have heard, and we believe, that existing powers need to be applied better and more consistently. We will continue to review this.

Delivering The New Approach

Building a language, description and understanding of hateful extremism as the Commission has done is the first step in addressing the problems it causes.

Developing an evidence-based approach which effectively counters hateful extremist narratives both online and offline requires serious investment and research. We are putting forward a number of recommendations for both government and civil society.

The Commission's work in future will focus on countering hateful extremism. We believe our plural, tolerant and broad-minded society needs a Commission to lead the vital work of countering hateful extremism, delivering pioneering research

and developing more effective counter extremism interventions. We will be asking the Government to put the Commission on a statutory basis, accountable to Parliament. As an independent body, the Commission should hold government and civil society to account.

Above all countering extremism requires stronger leadership from across society. This is the whole of society response we want to see. Too many people in public life are stoking the fires of extremism; online and in our communities. Or are failing to respond consistently to hateful extremism.

We want to see more visible leadership and policies against hateful extremism from political parties and all others in public life. Public bodies need to recognise victims of extremism and to provide support to them. We want to see civil society groups challenge extremists and their hateful ideologies. We want to see faith leaders call out the extremists from the communities they belong to. We want to see tech companies pro-actively rise to the challenge, rather than being reactive. Going beyond take-down and developing more innovative ways to encourage positive behaviour online.

Yet often countering extremism and defending our society results not in thanks and support, but abuse, harassment and intimidation. Government must do more to support those performing this vital role.

To drive Government's work forward, we are calling on the Home Secretary to chair a hateful extremism task force that meets regularly. Based on the serious violence task force this should bring together leaders from across government, regulators and civil society to oversee development of the new strategy and to respond to extremist incidents.

We are a wonderfully diverse country made up different races, political opinion, sexualities, religions and beliefs. The protection of individual liberties and our wider fundamental freedoms is part and parcel of who we are as a country. Together we can and must play our part in defending and preserving our democratic values from those who seek to undermine them. Inaction is quite simply not an option; hateful extremism demands a response.

OUR VISION

Our vision is one where together we uphold our democratic way of life in a peaceful, plural and inclusive society that opposes intolerance.

OUR WORK

Engagement

Call for Evidence

Academic Work

Government Data

WE HEARD ABOUT

Democratic Debate

Including behaviours that are offensive, dissenting, critical, or ultra-religiously conservative.

Restriction of rights and freedoms

Behaviours that result in the restriction of freedoms or democratic values.

Hateful extremism

Behaviours that are actively hateful or incite hatred towards an identified out-group for the survival of an in-group.

Terrorism and violent extremism

Behaviours that involve the use of terrorism or serious violence.

REQUIRED RESPONSE

Protect and encourage debate. Better challenge of incivility.

Government and civil society must promote equality and protect victims against discrimination.

Proportionate response through existing legal powers and more effective responses by civil society including counter narratives.

Strong powers in place, must be clearly distinct from other counter extremism work.

We are calling for a focus on challenging hateful extremism

CHALLENGING HATEFUL EXTREMISM

We summarise hateful extremism as:

- Behaviours that can incite and amplify hate, or engage in persistent hatred, or equivocate about and make the moral case for violence;
- And that draw on hateful, hostile or supremacist beliefs directed at an out-group who are perceived as a threat to the wellbeing, survival or success of an in-group;
- And that cause, or are likely to cause, harm to individuals, communities or wider society.

We need a whole society response:

- Better understanding of hateful extremism's harms and impact on victims
- More effective Interventions based on evidence and directly challenging hateful extremism
- Mobilising and supporting leadership to stand up consistently to hateful extremism alongside a statutory Commission

The Commission will:

- Produce a working definition of hateful extremism by Spring 2020
- Put in place a small and dedicated new network and recruit 2 additional commissioners.
- Review existing Government legislation to better protect victims
- Build a toolbox of innovative and established interventions to challenge hateful extremism.

Summary of Recommendations

Our core recommendation is to focus on tackling hateful extremism.

We currently summarise hateful extremism as:

- Behaviours that can incite and amplify hate, or engage in persistent hatred, or equivocate about and make the moral case for violence;
- And that draw on hateful, hostile or supremacist beliefs directed at an out-group who are perceived as a threat to the wellbeing, survival or success of an in-group;
- And that cause, or are likely to cause, harm to individuals, communities or wider society.

Government's new counter extremism strategy should focus on hateful extremism and be based on the content and recommendations of this report. It should be victim-centred and rights-based, and start from a positive vision for our plural, tolerant and inclusive country.

All our evidence suggests that the best and most effective work to counter extremism happens on the ground, led by people from the communities they belong to. This is why a whole of society response is so important – because everyone can play a role.

Focus on Tackling Hateful Extremism

Too many people feel unsure about what is or isn't extremism. **Better understanding** of hateful extremism must start with a definition. This will allow us to understand victims' experiences better. It will also allow us to more readily identify hateful extremism when it is occurring.

Yet even when it is recognised, as our report shows, our interventions are not effective enough. We need to understand what works to challenge hateful extremism when it happens. We must try new and innovative approaches. And we must do more to challenge hateful extremist ideologies, narratives and beliefs.

Delivering **more effective interventions** to counter extremism requires a commitment that is matched across government and civil society to work together and support others doing this work. Especially in the face of abuse by hateful extremists. We have heard and we believe that existing powers need to be applied better and more consistently. We will continue to review this.

This needs better leadership in defence of our society and communities. Extremists suppress those who stand up to them. This makes **mobilising and supporting leadership** vital but challenging. Leadership is the primary role of the Commission.

Leadership in government needs to improve, and we are recommending a new task force chaired by the Home Secretary, similar to the serious violence task force, with involvement of those in civil society who are already working on extremism. The role of civil society is also crucial, and we also want to see a much broader range of organisations, including human rights organisations, take responsibility to counter hateful extremism.

Future Work of the Commission

A strong, independent Commission for Countering Extremism is needed to step up our work to counter hateful extremism, to introduce new and innovative approaches, and to provide increased oversight and transparency of counter extremism work, including through the new strategy. A strengthened Commission can capitalise on our unique position between Government and civil society, providing the authoritative insight on the state of hateful extremism across England and Wales. We are already discussing this with Government.

The Commission should be placed on a statutory basis to guarantee independence. This has been raised frequently during our national conversation. In addition, the Commission needs information sharing powers with specific government bodies to enable us to provide policy makers with the best information.

While the legislative process takes place, the Commission will deliver its ambitious work programme. We will produce an annual report starting next year. We are asking government to help us recruit two additional commissioners to bring wider

skills and experience to specific areas of work. Our work programme includes:

- Leading a small and dedicated network of counter extremism organisations to identify emerging issues and put in place interventions, as well as further professionalise counter extremism. This will also support the proposed task force.
- Pioneering research that develops and tests a full, working definition of hateful extremism in time for the new counter extremism strategy in 2020. Alongside this we will review existing legislation that addresses hateful extremism and can protect victims and counter extremists from abuse. In addition, we will research the impact of extremism on victims and help those supporting them.
- Catalogue existing expertise and practice and trial new and innovative interventions, to develop a new toolbox of measures to counter extremism.
- Focus efforts to counter hateful extremist narratives online and offline, including by holding a summit to discuss the health and best practice of this work.

Recommendations for Government

The new counter extremism strategy should be based on hateful extremism and the recommendations in this report.

- The Home Secretary should chair a counter hateful extremism task force, modelled on the serious violence task force, that regularly brings together leading figures inside and outside government. This task force should oversee development of the new strategy and respond to extremism incidents,

including those identified by the Commission's new network.

- Government should be clearer on the difference between work to counter terrorism and to counter hateful extremism. At the same time, work to build resilience in communities from those that seek to restrict the rights and opportunities of others, particularly women and young people, should move to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and receive more funding.
- Government should deliver its commitment to set out who it will or will not engage and why, with clear guidance on how organisations and individuals can regain this status.
- Government must also do more to support and protect those organisations and individuals who are countering extremism from abuse, harassment and intimidation. This includes enforcing harassment laws evenly across different communities.
- In addition, there are specific recommendations on unregulated schools, internet, the role of politicians, political parties and the media.

Recommendations for Civil and Wider Society

As part of the whole of society response, everyone has a role to play.

- Members of the public should continue to report, and where safe, challenge hatred and abuse wherever they see it.
- Everyone, especially national, local and faith leaders, must be consistent in their

actions against all forms of extremism and not legitimise perpetrators of abuse, even unwittingly.

- Organisations already countering extremism must continue their efforts, and work with the Commission to build understanding and interventions against hateful extremism – backed by sustainable funding from charitable sources.
- Social media companies must reduce the hostile atmosphere on their platforms by enforcing laws and terms and conditions, as well as new work to build better conversations online.
- We also want to see more organisations taking part in counter extremism work. Human rights organisations must champion all human rights in line with Article 17 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR), and we want more organisations to fund counter extremism alongside other work that also strengthens all the communities in our country.

An Inclusive, Peaceful and Plural Britain

Democratic debate is vital to our country. We are a wonderfully diverse country. Plural. Tolerant of views and beliefs we find disturbing or illiberal. Broad-minded and able to cope with people living in a huge range of ways.

Countering extremism is about standing up for all these things, and for each other – a positive and encouraging vision in stark contrast to those who want to divide us.

As a worker for Show Racism the Red Card told us, we need “an inclusive society

where individuals are encouraged...[to] talk through positive solution[s]. An educated society where there are clear opportunities for all.” This was echoed by many of those we spoke to.

Many responses to our call for evidence stated that Britain should be a place where individuals embrace each other’s differences and celebrate diversity. One reminded us of the London Olympics which showcased our ability to celebrate diversity. But we don’t just need a festival, instead a lasting national celebration of what we share, and our future together. At this particularly challenging time for our country, it is more important than ever to give the people of this country a positive and inclusive vision to rally around.

Instilling this sense of purpose, of pride and passion into work to counter extremism is vital. The Lead Commissioner’s vision is how we are taking this core principle forward. It sits at the heart of all our recommendations.

Future Work Programme

The Commission will now focus on the following priorities:

Pioneering Research

...providing authoritative insight on hateful extremism



Producing a non-statutory **working definition** of hateful extremism for **Spring 2020**

Ensure there is more support for victims and they are at the **heart** of this work.



Identify emerging situations where hateful extremism may occur.



Write an annual report on progress in tackling **hateful extremism** since this report.



More effective Interventions

...based on evidence and directly challenging hateful extremism



Develop and test a toolbox of innovative and established techniques **against** hateful extremism.

Reviewing implementation of public order, hate crime and harassment legislation to see how they can better **protect** victims of hateful extremism.



Determine how hateful extremism can best take account of **human rights** legislation and treaties.

Hold a **summit** on how to better challenge hateful extremism online and offline.

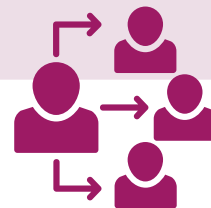


Mobilising and Supporting Leadership

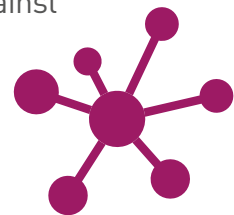
...to stand up consistently to hateful extremism alongside a statutory Commission

Strengthen the

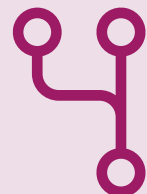
Commission so it continues to operate independently across government and civil society, including with two additional commissioners.



Establish a small and dedicated **network** of civil society organisations who stand up against hateful extremism.



Support the Home Secretary's hateful extremism task force to respond to incidents and develop a new strategy to counter hateful extremism.



Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of the many people from across the breadth of England, Wales and beyond who have added their evidence, thoughts and insight to this report.

Most importantly, I would like to thank all the victims who came forward with their deeply affecting stories about how extremism has had an impact on their lives. I know how hard it can be to tell others about these experiences, and I am grateful to all those who did, whether in person or in writing. We have tried to do justice to these stories, but nothing compares to the words of the victim themselves.

It is not just victims who have provided invaluable evidence. Practitioners from civil society, national and local government have spent many hours of their time telling me about their work, and I never failed to be impressed by their dedication and enthusiasm to the difficult roles they perform. Public servants from across government, regulators and other public bodies worked hard to pull together the information that I requested. Having your work reviewed is never comfortable, so I am grateful for their forbearance. This is particularly true of the Home Office's Counter Extremism Unit. I'm grateful to NatCen Social Research and to the Policy Institute at King's College London for their important research and to the Woolf Institute for additional analysis.

My Expert Group has been invaluable, and I have been honoured to receive advice from such a group of talented and knowledgeable

individuals. At the time of writing, the expert group includes: Chetan Bhatt, Emman El- Badawy, Fiyaz Mughal, Hilary Pilkington, Jamie Bartlett, Julian Hargreaves, Mark Rowley, Nick Lowles, Peter Tatchell, Pragna Patel, Sasha Havlicek, Simon Blackburn, and Sunder Katwala. They are not the only experts I have consulted; I am equally grateful to all those who were willing to spare me their time. While this report reflects my views not theirs, I hope they recognise how their contributions strengthened it.

Finally I would like to thank Euan Neill, my Head of Secretariat, and all the members of our team for their work over the past 18 months. And to Policy Exchange for allowing Hannah Stuart to come and work in the Commission for a year. Whether joining me on the full journey, or contributing for a shorter period, they have all worked tirelessly to make my engagement, my research and my recommendations possible.

Sara Khan

Lead Commissioner

