

Lord Evans
Committee on Standards In Public Life
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ



25 November 2020

Dear Lord Evans,

Intimidation in Public Life Review

Thank you for the letter you kindly wrote asking us for a progress report on the review of Intimidation in Public Life. Commander Usher's department have been progressing this and beneath is an update on the current progress of the recommendations made by Lord Bew.

The NPCC should ensure that local police forces have sufficient training to enable them to effectively investigate offences committed through social media. Local police forces should be able to access advice and guidance on the context in which MPs and Parliamentary candidates work.

Building on the work done in providing all forces with access to the 'Researching, Identifying and Tracing Electronic Suspects' training course, a strong and reliable network has been established under Operation Bridger which is the mechanism by which the Parliamentary Liaison and Investigation (PLaIT) Team based within the MPS supports the single points of contact (SPOCs) within each force area. A key component of this support relationship is input regarding digital and online investigations and knowledge and learning disseminated by PLaIT to the force SPOCs across the country. Periodically throughout the year, with the latest being September 2020, all forces were invited to an Op Bridger conference (held virtually this year due to Covid restrictions) at which they were given further advice and guidance regarding the current threat picture for MPs, the context of the political landscape and the emerging issues including online activity against MPs. This is also an opportunity to regularly ask questions and ensure SPOC knowledge and capability is consistent across the country in our mission to protect all MPs and offer a quality service when it comes to investigating offences on social media platforms. PLaIT as the central provider of this support have developed relationships and established expectations with social media and online platforms, the benefits of which are shared across the Op Bridger network.

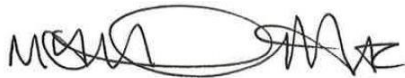
The NPCC, working with the CPS and the College of Policing, should produce accessible guidance for Parliamentary candidates giving clear advice on behaviour they may experience during a campaign which is likely to constitute a criminal offence.



A comprehensive 'Joint Guidance for Candidates in Elections' was produced and updated for the 2019 General Election. The Candidate Guidance was made available on numerous official sites online as well as being circulated with an attached letter explaining its value and how to engage with it which was sent to each registered candidate in the election. A copy of the guidance and a relevant letter was also disseminated to each Political Party and each returning officer as well to maximise understanding and exposure of the messages within. The 'Joint Guidance for Candidates in Elections' encompassed general information about types of behaviour that might be experienced as a candidate in an election, what to do if it constitutes a criminal offence, general safety advice and who to contact if in danger, to report crime or for advice. There was clear guidance around legislation which might be relevant to offences a candidate might experience in order to educate candidates and inform their decision making when reporting offences and seeking police support. The 'Joint Guidance for Candidates in Elections' was also produced in Welsh, to increase accessibility for all candidates and the number of websites where it was available and signposted. It was reinforced by individual issuing of the guidance. Briefings were held in each force area for candidates to provide face to face input in support of the produced guidance and the guidance itself was interactive and had links to other information sources and support. The guidance was reviewed after the election and the positive feedback has enabled a living document to be a basis for which a refreshed guidance can be stood up and redistributed at short notice for an election when required.

We will endeavour to keep you updated with the progress of these recommendations. Should you wish to contact Commander Usher directly please address any queries to Commander Usher, New Scotland Yard, 1-8 Richmond Terrace, London, SW1A 2NJ.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MH', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Martin Hewitt QPM
Chair
National Police Chiefs' Council