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Sent by email to Chairs of political parties

represented in Westminster.

**Wednesday 16 September 2020**

**Intimidation in Public Life Review follow up**

In December 2017, the Committee published its report on the subject of [Intimidation in Public Life](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/666927/6.3637_CO_v6_061217_Web3.1__2_.pdf). We heard evidence of an increasing prevalence of persistent and shocking intimidatory behaviour, including of candidates at elections, which should concern everyone who cares about our democracy.

Three years on, we are following up the recommendations made in that report with the intention of publishing a formal update on progress by the end of the year.

Political parties have an important duty of care to their candidates, members and supporters, so must work to address this intimidatory behaviour and culture. We made a number of recommendations to the political parties. The parties need to do more to support and protect candidates, especially female, BAME and LGBT candidates, individuals who are more likely to be targeted as subjects of intimidation. Parties need to have clear codes of conduct to outline unacceptable behaviours, and ensure that those codes are enforced. Those in positions of leadership should call out intimidation wherever it occurs.

We also recommend that the parties should work together to develop a joint code of conduct (now Statement of Conduct) on intimidatory behaviour during election campaigns. The Committee has written separately with The Jo Cox Foundation on this.

To that end, we would welcome hearing from you before 31 October 2020 on the steps you have taken towards implementing our recommendations, which are set out in full overleaf. This will ensure our follow up work is as up to date as possible.

The Committee looks forward to your response. I am sending this to the Chairs of all parties with representation in the Westminster Parliament.

Yours sincerely,



Lord Evans of Weardale KCB DL

**Chair, Committee on Standards in Public Life**

The recommendations made to the political parties, in full, were:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Recommendation** | **Timeframe** |
| Those in positions of leadership within political parties must set an appropriate tone during election campaigns, and make clear that any intimidatory behaviour is unacceptable. They should  challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs. | Immediately |
| Political parties must proactively work together to tackle the issue of intimidation in public life. | Immediately |
| Political parties should set clear expectations about the behaviour expected of their members, both offline and online through a code of conduct for members which specifically prohibits any intimidatory behaviour. Parties should ensure that members are familiar with the code. The consequences of any breach of the code should be clear and unambiguous. | Within one year |
| Political parties must ensure that party members who breach the party’s code of conduct by engaging intimidation are consistently and appropriately disciplined in a timely manner. | Immediately |
| Political parties must collect data on the number of complaints against members for engaging in intimidatory behaviour, and the outcome of any disciplinary processes which result from these  complaints. | Within one year |
| Leaders of political parties should always call out intimidatory behaviour, even when it is perpetrated by those in the party’s fringes. Fringe group leaders and spokespeople should immediately denounce any intimidatory behaviour on the part of  their members or supporters. | Immediately |
| The political parties must work together to develop a joint code of conduct on intimidatory behaviour during election campaigns[[1]](#footnote-1) by December 2018. The code should be jointly enforced by the  political parties | Joint code should be drawn up  within one year – it should be  enforced beginning at the next  general election. |
| Political parties must take steps to provide support for all candidates, including through networks, training, and support and resources. In particular, the parties should develop these support mechanisms for female, BAME, and LGBT candidates who are more likely to be targeted as subjects of intimidation. | Before the next general  election (progress should be  made well before the next  fixed general election date of  2022). |
| Political parties must offer more support and training to candidates on their use of social media. This training should include: managing social media profiles, block and mute features,  reporting content, and recognising when behaviour should be reported directly to the police. | At the next general election  (progress should be made well  before the next fixed general  election date of 2022). |

1. Has since been revised in view of continuing evidence of intimidation in public life to say that “the joint standard should apply at all times and not just periods of election campaigns”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)