**INTIMIDATION IN PUBLIC LIFE REVIEW FOLLOW UP**

**RECOMMENDATION TRACKER**

Up to date as of 17 December 2020

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Recommendation**  | **Responsibility** | **Progress**  | **Progress rating** |
| Government should bring forward legislation to shift the liability of illegal content online towards social media companies. | Government | [The **government** published the joint DCMS-Home Office Online Harms White Paper in 2019](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/online-harms-white-paper/online-harms-white-paper#part-2-regulatory-model). In that White Paper, the government said that shifting liability for illegal content is not the most effective mechanism for driving behavioural change by companies. Instead, they have increased the responsibility on companies in a way that is compatible with existing law. |  |
| The government should consult on the introduction of a new offence in electoral law of intimidating Parliamentary candidates and party campaigners.  | Government | [In 2018, the **government** consulted on the introduction of a new electoral offence of intimidation of all candidates and campaigners during elections](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/799873/Protecting-the-Debate-Government-Response-2019.05.01.pdf).[The government has committed to legislating for this offence when parliamentary time allows](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-safeguards-uk-elections). |  |
| The government should bring forward legislation to remove the requirement for candidates standing as local councillors to have their home addresses published on the ballot paper. Returning Officers should not disclose the home addresses of those attending an election court. | Government | The **government** published legislation in 2018 to remove the requirement for candidates standing as local councillors to have their home addresses published on the ballot paper. These provisions came into force for the polls on 2 May 2019. |  |
| 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.  | Political parties | All of the political parties represented in Westminster have in place their own Code of Conduct, which sets out the minimum standards of behaviour expected of all party members. |  |
| 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. | Political parties | All of the political parties represented in Westminster have in place their own internal disciplinary process for dealing with alleged breaches of the party’s code to ensure appropriate and timely discipline. It is not clear to what extent parties use the full range of sanctions available to them. |  |
| 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. | Political parties | Some of the political parties represented in Westminster have written to confirm they 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. |  |
| The political parties must work together to develop a joint code of conduct on intimidatory behaviour during election campaigns by December 2018. The code should be jointly enforced by the political parties. | Political parties | The Committee has been working with The Jo Cox Foundation to take forward this recommendation. [Our work has resulted in a high-level statement of principle outlining the minimum standards of behaviour that all party members should aspire to.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/intimidation-in-public-life-joint-statement-on-conduct-of-political-party-members) We have written to political parties represented in Westminster asking them to confirm their support for the statement in time for the 2021 local elections. **We welcome support for the statement from the Labour Party, the SNP, the Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, and the Green Party.** We will be publishing formal replies from other political parties as they come in.  |  |
| 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 intimation. 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.  | Political parties  | Some of the political parties represented in Westminster have written to confirm they provide training and support for candidates on intimidation, including social media training. |  |
| The Home Office and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport should develop a strategy for engaging with international partners to promote international consensus on what constitutes hate crime and intimidation online. | Home Office and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport | [In 2018, the **government** committed to developing a strategy for engaging with international partners to promote international consensus on what constitutes hate crime and intimidation online.](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748175/Hate_crime_refresh_2018_FINAL_WEB.PDF) [The government is currently working with international partners on this issue.](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748175/Hate_crime_refresh_2018_FINAL_WEB.PDF) |  |
| The National Police Chiefs Council 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. | National Police Chiefs Council | [The **NPCC** wrote to confirm that all police forces have access to training provided by the College of Policing and that police forces continue to receive advice and guidance through designated single points of contact in each force area.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/intimidation-in-public-life-letter-from-npcc) |  |
| The College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice for elections should be updated to include offences relating to intimidation, including offences committed through social media. | College of Policing  | [The **College of Policing’s** Authorised Professional Practice for elections has been updated to include information on the Committee’s report, intimidation and the police’s responsibility to mitigate it and investigate allegations and offences related to intimidation.](https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/policing-elections/)  |  |
| The National Police Chiefs Council, working with the Crown Prosecution Service 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. | National Police Chiefs Council, working with the Crown Prosecution Service and the College of Policing | [In 2019, the **NPCC** published joint guidance with the **Crown Prosecution Service**, the **College of Policing** and the **Electoral Commission**, about behaviour which candidates in elections may experience during a campaign which is likely to constitute a criminal offence.](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf_file/Joint-Guidance-for-Candidates-in-Elections.pdf)  |  |
| Social media companies must develop and implement automated techniques to identify intimidatory content posted on their platforms. They should use this technology to ensure intimidatory content is taken down as soon as possible.  | Social media companies | **Twitter, Facebook** and **Google** have written to confirm they use automated techniques to help them identify and take down intimidatory content faster. |  |
| Social media companies must do more to prevent users being inundated with hostile messages on their platforms, and to support users who become victims of this behaviour. | Social media companies | **Twitter, Facebook** and **Google** have written to confirm the steps they are taking to prevent users being victims of intimidation and harassment on their platforms. |  |
| Social media companies must implement tools to enhance the ability of users to tackle online intimidation through user options.  | Social media companies | **Twitter, Facebook** and **Google** have written to confirm they offer a range of tools and user options to enhance the ability of users to tackle online intimidation. |  |
| All social media companies must ensure they are able to make decisions quickly and consistently on the takedown of intimidatory content online. | Social media companies | **Twitter, Facebook** and **Google** have written to confirm the steps they are taking to ensure they’re able to make decisions quickly and consistently on the takedown of intimidatory content. |  |
| Twitter, Facebook and Google must publish UK-level performance data on the number of reports they receive, the percentage of reported content that is taken down, and the time it takes to take down that content, on at least a quarterly basis.  | Social media companies | **Twitter, Facebook** and **Google** have written to confirm they now publish transparency data on reported content and takedowns. Neither Twitter, Facebook or Google publish data on the time it takes to remove reported content. |  |
| Social media companies must urgently revise their tools for users to escalate any reports of potential illegal online activity to the police.  | Social media companies | Neither **Twitter** or **Facebook** have revised their tools for users to escalate reports of potential illegal online activity to the police. **Google** has written to confirm they have systems in place to escalate content that may be unlawful. |  |
| The social media companies should work with the government to establish a ‘pop up’ social media reporting team for election campaigns.  | Social media companies | **Twitter, Facebook** and **Google** have written to confirm they established cross-functional election teams to monitor and respond to challenges, including quickly taking down intimidatory content, during the 2019 General Election. |  |
| Social media companies should actively provide advice, guidance and support to Parliamentary candidates on steps they can take to remain safe and secure while using their sites. | Social media companies | **Twitter, Facebook** and **Google** have written to confirm they actively provide advice, guidance and support to Parliamentary candidates on steps they can take to remain safe and secure while using their sites. |  |
| Press regulation bodies should extend their codes of conduct to prohibit unacceptable language that incites intimidation. | Press regulation bodies (IPSO and Impress) | [In 2018, the Editors’ Code of Practice Committee, who oversee **IPSO’s** Code of Practice, wrote to say that they would not be amending the code to prohibit unacceptable language that incites intimidation.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/intimidation-in-public-life-letter-from-ipso)They acknowledged that online intimidation is a disturbing aspect of public life but said that the Code already protects individuals in a range of circumstances, including discrimination and harassment.[**IMPRESS** has written to confirm they are undertaking a comprehensive review of their Standards Code over the next 18 months](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/intimidation-in-public-life-letters-from-impress) with the intention of publishing a new version of the Code in July 2022. It will consider issues around discrimination, harassment, online threats and intimidation.  |  |
| News organisations should only consider stories from freelance journalists that meet the standards of IPSO’s Editors Code, or the Editorial Guidelines of Impress, as appropriate, and ensure that freelance journalists are aware of this policy. | News organisations | [In 2020, the Committee followed up with the Editors’ Code of Practice Committee, who oversee **IPSO’s** Code of Practice.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/intimidation-in-public-life-letter-from-ipso) They said that publishers are responsible for the content they publish, including that from freelancers. Editors who publish freelancers’ work must ensure that it complies with the Code of Practice. They also said that freelancers would have signed a contract saying they would abide by the Code. |  |