

Intimidation in Public Life

Written Evidence

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Pamela Tucker

I have no idea if I am able to make any comment about this. However, I feel I should point out that intimidation is not new to this campaign. I campaign for Brexit last year and there has been a constant vilification of Leave voters ever since. Not all of this can be controlled but some of it is coming from MPS themselves. Furthermore, on the subject of vilification I must point out the sort of comments being made in Glastonbury this year. Its one thing to make a political point its another to accuse Theresa May of 'let the nurses burn, let people burn ...letting people starve and then calling out the troops to protect us etc.... and God knows what else which was being spouted. I attach a pic (I couldnt send the video) which shows this was broadcast on the BBC. The level of hatred was quite shocking. If this had been directed at a minority group I am certain the producer would have cut it immediately as a hate crime. We suffer from weak leadership and not enough is being done to stop this increasing hostility, which was so bad last year I actually contacted the police. Another Leave campaigner had razor blades and glass left on his garden where his children play. I am at a loss for the future of our country. I see huge anger building amoung Leave voters at the antics going on in Parliament. It is quite clear a lot of young people are angry. But verbal agression is now becoming mainstream and not enough is being done to stop it. We need leadership from the top and an end to the undermining of democratic decision making, much of which, I am afraid, is coming from MPS themselves.

Roger Southam

Dear Lord Bew

I am aware from the press today that you are taking a stand on the appalling treatment of MP's and this affecting people coming forward to public office.

I am non-exec chair of The Leasehold Advisory Service and have suffered continuous abuse from the secretariat of the All Party Parliamentary Group for leasehold property chaired by Sir Peter Bottomley MP and Jim Fitzpatrick MP. The Leasehold Advisory Service is an arms length body to DCLG and I was appointed following interview and selection in December 2014.

The website for Leasehold Knowledge Partnership contains numerous unfounded and unfair comments and criticisms. They have put me in Private Eye three times and the latest entry is below. I have been named in the house without any recourse or ability to react.



Going Southam

GOVERNMENT action to ban unfair tenants' fees, ground rent and other scams was promised in the Queen's Speech. It was greeted with delight by the all-party parliamentary group, which has long championed leasehold reform – and silence from the useless taxpayer-funded Leasehold Advisory Service (LEASE).

Eye readers will remember that LEASE was set up by parliament to protect easy-to-rip-off leasehold flat owners but has since been accused of being hijacked by the valuers, lawyers, surveyors, freeholders and property managing agents who benefit from the lucrative leasehold industry. Its chair is the flamboyant Roger Southam – a former managing agent who once advised freeholders how they could stuff flat owners by “maximising ground rents” and who now works for... Savills.

Southam recently apologised that a “prior engagement” meant he was unable to attend the forthcoming all-party group meeting, where urging the government to act swiftly on its reform pledge will top the agenda. The blunt reply from the all-party group secretariat, the Leasehold Knowledge Partnership: “Dear Roger, Thank you for letting us know you are unable to attend the APPG. I’m sure you will also understand why you had not actually been invited.”

This cannot be right and will surely put people off coming forward to take public appointments if MP's and the secretariat behave in this way. LEASE is not hijacked by anybody and I have spent my whole life seeking the best interests for leaseholders.

I have the support and backing of DCLG and they are satisfied I am undertaking my duties professionally and without bias.

I would be pleased to meet with your team to discuss in detail. Thanks in advance

Roger Southam

Dear Lord Bew

I recently expressed an interest of pursuing some work in public office and discussed with my wife standing as a candidate for MP in our local constituency.

My wife forbade me on the grounds she didn't want the abuse or potential increased threat to the family. If that is repeated in other households up and down the land, it will certainly diminish the quality candidate pool.

Kind regards

Matthew NOBLE - Chartered Building Surveyor (MRICS)

Dear Lord Bew,

Forgive me please for taking the liberty to contact you. Given your role as Chair on standards in Public Life, I would like to echo that abuse should have no part to play in public life.

Might I venture a thought that there are two types of abuse as I see it. There is abuse just for abuse sake, then there is another born out of a frustration and total lack perceived concern that people feel their representatives have for them.

As you know it is against Commons rules to call a Member a liar. Yet the public believe they lie continuously! Is this standard a carte blanche for them to lie anywhere.

I draw your attention to the Prime Minister. She said during the recent election that if she lost six seats she would resign. She lost 30 and is still PM. Now can you understand the frustration and abuse that might be levelled at her for that?

[REDACTED]

These are just some examples of abuse from history there are many many more, as I'm sure you are aware of. Being Irish I am only too well aware of what the word Tory means. It comes from the Irish word of the same derivation. It means among others, thief, cattle [REDACTED] what the conservatives call themselves!

Might I suggest that instead of the abuse derived out of frustration with our politicians being dealt with under the law, the underlying reason needs to be addressed.

I finish, my Lord with an attached clip from a Danish MP who confronts her abusers to try to understand why. It is brave of her yes, but also one who thinks that sweeping it under the carpet of the law will only make it worse and best to confront it.

Yours Sincerely

Pearse English

Dear Prof. Bew,

I've just read that your office is conducting a review into election intimidation.

The article on the BBC website claims that social media has contributed to this rise of intimidation. I too work in a University and one of my research interests is trying to digest and extract valuable information from social media. Through my research I've observed first hand how disrespectful individuals are to staff at organisations. Where I have read these tweets, I am hopeful the tweeter would not repeat their tweet in person - however I do believe that it is only a matter of years before this derogatory dialogue becomes common place in the real world. Although I have never considered whether this can be avoided, I believe it has always been present, but as I never came across these people in the real world I was ignorant to the issue. Social media has provided a powerful broadcasting platform to the masses and I do not believe there is anything of substance that can be done.

However, I do believe MPs should lead by example. When you watch the news it is not uncommon to hear jeering in the House of Commons. Therefore it almost makes it acceptable for the public to continue this disrespect towards MPs. If it was possible to remove this jeering, I believe it would reduce the level of intimidation MPs receive from the public. Furthermore, I am unaware of this jeering taking place in any other political chamber/house - it may be interesting to review other countries that demonstrate more respect towards their MPs.

Warmest regards

Adam

Dear Sir

I notice in today's media that you will demand a meeting with Facebook, twitter to explain to MPs of their action on trolls, intimidation, and abuse.

Prior to this meeting would it be possible to set out the exact same guidelines to Members of Parliament.

We are in a period where the public have absolutely no trust in the majority of MPs.

We have had two referendums where politicians refuse to accept the results, and at the same time call the public, thick, bigots, racists, loons, didn't know why they were voting, didn't know what they were voting for, etc etc.

We the public receive mountains of lies through the post prior to elections, be they local, regional, or general, and as soon as that person is elected, they then turn into self importance politicians with only their personal agendas.

To have an inquiry into intimidation, abuse, or any other issue relating to politicians, do you not think a debate on the standards of MPs we have serving the country, and their behaviour towards the public.

We have labour MPs responding to questions, by boasting of their salary increase, SNP MPs abusing constituents when asking questions, and this is only the tip of the iceberg, Lib Dems telling us they will make leaving the EU hell, Tories infighting on what their vision of brexit will be.

At present we the public see the majority of politicians in both Westminster, Holyrood refusing to accept the democratic wish of the UK, Scottish voters, and until these same politicians accept the democracy that they claim to represent, they are not fit to be a British politician.

The people voted in two referendums, politicians and millionaire business people are fighting against the democratic vote made by the public, and this is the main reason that most of the intimidation, and abuse is fuelled.

We need the politicians reminded that it is the public that they represent, and not just here to lines their pockets, and pay their ticket on the gravy train.

Having meeting with Facebook and twitter without identifying the underlying problem will only be papering over the cracks.

Alistair McCarthy

Sir Ronald Watson CBE

Dear Lord Bew

I was interested to read of the inquiry you are leading into this subject but I thought I would outline to you my view that this is not a new problem but a continuation and extension of long standing difficulties.

By way of anecdotal example I was a Conservative Parliamentary candidate for a Merseyside seat in the 1979 and 1983 General Elections.

During this period some of the behaviour I had to deal with included

- 1, abusive phone calls starting at 0430 on a daily basis
2. abusive unsigned letters
3. delivery of nearly 20 parcels of goods that I had not ordered
4. damage to my car
- 5.harassment of my children at both primary and secondary school
- 6 harassment of my wife in various public areas

This was a turbulent time on Merseyside and I had to seek Police advice on a number of occasions

In addition as the Conservative Leader of a Merseyside Council there was constant abuse , threat and intimidation

Perhaps one of the worst examples was when a group of some 15-20 people invaded the Council Chamber at Bootle Town Hall in an aggressive and noisy manner and whilst the Police were present they took the operational decision that because they were concerned about violence that the Councillors should leave the chamber and allow the protesters to continue with shouting, bell ringing etc.

I can only say that before I took their advice I made the point that I had been elected to be in the Chamber and they had not

The history, therefore, of problems is a long one that social media on the face of it appears to have made worse but I share the concerns that behaviour of this sort is proving to be a considerable disincentive to people who in other circumstances might consider standing for public office and our democracy is harmed by this scenario.

I make these comments in what I hope you will consider to be a constructive manner and if you feel able to take some of them into account I would hope this would be of assistance in the work you are doing.

Sir Ronald Watson CBE

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Introduction

Using data from an online ‘victim’ survey, this paper provides analysis and commentary in relation to important themes in recent policy and academic debates about hate crime, online abuse, and misogynistic crime. Violence and abuse against women continues to receive an insufficient response from the criminal justice system: both in terms of reacting to existing cases and in terms of prevention. Recent reports from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) (2014, 2015) draw attention to the scale of domestic violence – estimated to generate around 1M calls to the police every year, and accounting for around ten per cent of all recorded crime in England and Wales. In addition to highlighting the scale of domestic abuse, both HMIC reports also note worrying gaps in terms of important concepts such as ‘coercive control’, now subject to legislative action but poorly understood by police. In January 2017, media reported that the Justice Minister for England and Wales was seeking measures to prevent those accused of domestic violence from directly cross-examining their victims within the family court system. Some months earlier, Nottinghamshire Police announced that they had begun recording misogynistic incidents as hate crimes, a classification subsequently discussed in a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Domestic Abuse. In May 2017, North Yorkshire Police became the second force to recognise misogyny as a hate crime. These developments followed a series of reports of high-profile women receiving online abuse following, among other things, their contribution to public debates about the portrayal of women on banknotes and in video games. As well as shifting police approaches, these incidents helped provoke a campaign to ‘reclaim the internet’, which mirrored feminist ‘reclaim the night’ protests, and sought to assert the participation of women in public life. Alongside these matters has been a wider debate about legal and criminal justice responses to online abuse of all forms. During a time of tightened resources, the capacity of police to investigate increasing reports of abuse on-line and via social media is limited, and jurisdictional and sectoral challenges apply to forms of offending that are transnational and subject to regulation by large corporations as well as criminal justice systems.

In the discussion below, we focus upon the intersections between these broad topics through an exploration of the gendered abuse of women online. The analysis is based upon a 2015 online survey conducted by the authors and our theoretical focus is on the extent to which this abuse can be

considered as a form of hate crime, and whether (if it could be so classified) this would be beneficial to them as individuals and/or to wider communities, or the public at large. Our argument is that the characteristics of the abuse experienced by respondents to our survey do tend to fit within established definitions of hate crime. However, some elements of prevailing interpretations of hate crime do not fit easily in terms of the experiences reported in our survey: suggesting that the concept of hate crime needs to be re-considered in relation to online experiences. One problematic issue, for example, is that a defining characteristic of hate crime is held to be that such offences include an intention to communicate to wider communities that they are unwelcome, inferior, at risk, and so on. This requires that the offence occurs in the public domain, such that it can 'speak' to the wider public. Our research suggests that considerable abuse was experienced in an online environment in which the distinction between public and private space is complex. If the virtual environment continues to become more significant to the everyday lives of citizens then these difficulties will become more salient and, we argue further below, the concept of hate crime itself needs to be refined.

Each of these themes are developed in greater detail below, following an outline of the extant literature that informs our study, but first an overview of our methodology is presented.

Methodology

This study focused on the online abuse of women who engage in feminist debates. Feminist debate and civic engagement on and offline is flourishing and of growing academic interest (Dean and Aune, 2015; Lewis and Marine, 2015). As more widely, online activity has been increasingly significant in the development and maintenance of feminist communities, debates and theories. Previous work by the authors (REF redacted for review purposes) and wider anecdotal evidence suggested that online debate and discussion was increasingly characterised by high levels of extreme abuse. This study of the experiences of women participating in (broadly defined) feminist debate and campaigning online provides an opportunity to measure the scale of such abuse, and to reflect upon the extent to which it corresponds to forms of hate crime. The experiences of respondents might not reflect those of other groups but their consideration contributes to wider debate about how best to interpret and respond to misogynistic crime.

To explore these matters, two data collection strategies were used: a survey and in-depth interviews. In 2015, an online questionnaire (completed by 227 respondents) gathered data about the use of social media; experiences of online abuse; and the impacts of and responses to abuse, including engagement with formal and informal agencies. Asking about 'general' and specific ('the

last incident') experiences of abuse enabled the capture of both the range and specificity of experiences without focusing disproportionately on the most significant experiences which might skew the data towards the 'worst' incidents. The survey addressed a wide- range of types of online abuse and was not couched in terms of 'hate' or 'bias' crimes. Respondents were asked about harassment and sexual harassment, threats of physical and sexual violence, flaming and trolling, stalking, electronic sabotage, impersonation and defamation. The study was not overly concerned to restrict respondents in terms of types of experience that they reported on. To gather rich, detailed information about experiences of abuse, open questions asked about experiences of abuse; in addition to closed questions about the nature, frequency, duration and volume of abuse. The open questions generated fulsome responses, creating an extensive qualitative dataset and, in terms of empirical data, it is these that are used as evidence in this paper. The second data collection method was a set of 17 in-depth interviews exploring emergent themes from the survey data. Those interviewed were a self-selected group who had participated in the survey or had respond to invitations via social media to participate. The qualitative survey results and interview data were analyzed thematically, through collaborative processes of reading and re-reading the data, discussing emerging themes and then coding the data. The study has benefitted from the exceptional richness of data provided by respondents. In the sections that follow, this data is presented unedited in line with Jane's (2014) call for presenting unexpurgated data to break the tyranny of silence around cyber-violence against women.

Key Features of Hate Crime

Since its development in the US in the early 1970s and the UK a decade or so later, the study of hate crime has demonstrated greater self-reflexivity than some other topics within criminology. A concern to define and demarcate the field might be common to many emerging sub-disciplines as novel theoretical debates, research questions and policy challenges come to be identified among scholars charting new subject matter. The study of hate crime, perhaps more so than other themes, is inherently self-reflexive in the sense that a key concern of researchers, policy-makers, and activists is to recognise that such offences are of symbolic importance and reflect wider patterns of power and prejudice. As such they can only be understood in their specific context and are highly malleable across time and space: the concept of 'hate' is recognised to be highly subjective and as such needs to be subject to on-going examination. As Tatchell (2002) noted, the substantive focus of hate crime legislation (at least in the US and in Britain) reflects the wider development of social movements and the inclusion of different types of prejudice beneath the canopy of hate crime policy reveals wider trends in civil society. Indeed, a critical point raised in the literature is that for a particular 'community of identity' to be brought beneath the legal and symbolic umbrella of hate crime

legislation they must have achieved some recognition and legitimacy. Hierarchies of oppression mean that the most vilified and marginalised might be the most in need of protection but find it the most difficult to garner the political support necessary to secure protected status (Mason, 2014a and 2014b, cited in Schweppe and Walters, 2015). Thus, in both countries, initial hate crime legislation was predominantly focused on racist violence and harassment. Subsequently other communities of identity have come to be recognised and protected, most obviously those victimised on the basis of sexuality and disability. As Gill and Mason-Bish (2013) noted, many activists included in their study argued that the failure to recognise VAWG as a form of hate crime reflects institutional sexism and patriarchal ideology that does not recognise gender-based prejudice.

As is the case with any sociological or criminological subject matter there is not a consistent or wholly accepted set of characteristics that provide for an uncontested definition of hate crime. The analysis of survey and interview data presented later in this paper examines the extent to which the abuse experienced online by feminist activists can be considered a form of hate crime. Further discussion is offered as to whether it would be a politically or socially advantageous to treat VAWG as hate crime, and what the experience of online abuse might mean for conceptualisation of such instances. A pre-requisite for these debates is to establish an overview of extant approaches to the concept of hate crime that will form a working benchmark against which the forms of abuse considered in our research can be measured. What follows is an overview of the key features of hate crime that emerge from the literature; lack of space clearly means that an extended conceptual analysis of the debates surrounding each of them cannot be provided – the intention instead is to provide a framework against which our data can be examined. Three broad themes are reviewed below in terms of debates within existing literature. These are, first, the conceptual difficulty of the term ‘hate’ as applied to complex and contradictory forms of offending. Second is a discussion of the ways in which hate crimes have a communicative element in that they have some wider exclusionary intent beyond the harm intended to the primary victim. Finally, the nature of public and private space in which hate crimes occur is considered. These three themes are subsequently used in the findings section of this paper as a way of considering if the experiences of women subject to misogynistic abuse online can be considered a form of hate crime. We argue that there are significant similarities between these experiences and other recognised forms of hate crime, although also important points of difference. In the final concluding section of this paper we considered the subsequent question: whether this abuse *should* (as opposed to *could*) be reconsidered and responded to as a form of hate crime.

Self-evidently the defining concept of ‘hate’ is the prevailing focus of much of the debate in the field of hate crime studies. Key concerns relate to the extent to which the motivations of offenders can be

reliably identified such that 'hate' can be identified and isolated as an important pre-cursor to a particular crime or incident: the 'mens rea' challenge. Related to this is the potential implication that 'ordinary' offences, or those targeted on individuals regardless of the characteristics of their identity, come not to be characterised in terms of 'hate'. Moreover, research evidence (Bowling, 1999; Ray et al, 2004) suggests that conceptually 'hate' might exaggerate the motivations of offenders, some of whom might be very young and engaging in behaviour that they (and others) might regard as relatively minor forms of anti-social behaviour. Certainly some of the evidence of online abuse uncovered by our study suggests that 'low level' name-calling formed an important part of the picture, alongside more threatening and graphic content. As the literature widely attests, the solution to this challenge in England and Wales has been to couch legislation in terms of 'aggravated' offences such that it is not a requirement for prosecutors to demonstrate that 'racial hatred', for example, was the sole or primary motivation behind the offence. That it was a demonstrable element of the crime or incident is sufficient for a conviction. Conceptually, some (e.g. Lawrence, 1999; McPhail, 2002) advocate consideration of these offences in terms of 'bias' or 'prejudice', to avoid this difficulty of identifying the emotional motivation of the offender. Similarly, Walters and Tumath (2014) focus on 'gender hostility' in order to demonstrate aggravation, rather than gender 'hatred', which is more difficult to prove. Another important practical response from criminal justice agencies has been the adoption of a victim-centric approach such that offences should be recorded as hate crimes if the victim or any other party identifies them as such. The complexity of the concept of 'hate' extends to VAWG and forms of hate crimes that occur between those in familial or personal relationships. Analysis of disablist hate crime, for example, indicates that offending is frequently perpetrated by carers, friends or family members and in cases that do not conform to prevailing conceptions that perpetrators are strangers 'hatred' does not adequately describe the relationship. As Thomas (2016) notes the term 'mate crime' sometimes is used in place of 'hate crime' in recognition that the perpetrators of disablist crime are often, at least overtly, in a positive relationship with those they target. A similar perspective has been applied to VAWG; which has traditionally been excluded from hate crime categorisations in part because of the definition of hate crime as perpetrated against strangers rather than those known to the victim. However, it is the exclusion of a gender analysis and gender advocates from the initial categorisation of hate crime that has allowed it to be so-defined (see McPhail, 2002 on this process in the US, Gelber, 2000, in Australia, and Gill and Mason-Bish, 2013, on the British experience).

The term 'hate' might also be problematic in the particular context of online abuse, given suggestions that the anonymity offered by cyberspace disinhibits the use of offensive or threatening language. Moreover, the impersonality of internet relationships might establish social and emotional distance between perpetrators and recipients such that the content and gravity of language used

online is different from that used in real world interactions. Specifically, though, we are not arguing that the online world is a hermetically sealed space in which all is different from real world environments. Later in this paper we explore the continuities as well as differences between the two. In this we recognise Shaw's (2014:274) point that '... people are not only when they are in anonymous Internet spaces, but also when they are in spaces where they can get away with being

As with other forms of abusive language, though, it is also important to recognise the context and wider dynamics of terminology reported in our study. Particular words are used in some circumstances as an offensive and derogatory epithet, while in other they are used as a 'reclaimed' piece of terminology, and in others still as almost as a term of endearment. For now though, our point is that the term 'hate' might not be sufficiently nimble to discern different meanings and motivations in online environments.

Following from this, another defining characteristic of hate crimes is that they mirror power relations and experiences of disadvantage and marginalisation evident more widely in society. The collective experience of oppression provides a context that often gives hate crime meaning that cannot simply be 'read' from the material, physical or other properties intrinsic to the actions themselves. Even in circumstances where perpetrators are not motivated by 'hate' in a developed or ideological sense, incidents are experienced by victims in ways that reflect wider practices of prejudice and discrimination. Moreover, these wider patterns of prejudice and discrimination are reinforced by hate crime; a defining feature of such crimes is that they communicate prejudice not only to the victim but also to the victim's community. As Gelber (2000: 278) argued hate crimes are a form of 'signal crime, since they 'have a ripple effect beyond their individual victims because they contribute to creating conditions in which violent crimes against some groups in society is able to be justified and condoned'. In the particular context of misogynistic crime, it might be argued that only crimes targeting minority groups should be classified as hate crime (Chakraborti and Garland, 2009). The disproportionate impact of such offences relates not, it is argued, by the actual properties of the incident or the motivation of the perpetrator (which is difficult in any case to discern) but by the relationship between those experiences and wider social, cultural and political marginalisation based on their minority status (Chakraborti and Garland, 2009: 153-4). In the context of racist hate crime, authors such as Bowling (1999) and Cohen (1997) have noted that incidents convey messages of white territoriality and exclusionary intent that are aimed at the wider community that the immediate victim is seen to represent. Chakraborti and Garland (2004) develop this further by examining the specific context of racist hate crime in rural communities where notions of authentic belonging and identity may be constructed by perpetrators of hate crime in ways that are distinct from those in urban environments. These communicative properties mean that hate crimes operate in a public arena in ways that many other forms of offending seek actively to avoid. Just as cultural

criminologists note the 'spectacle' that is inherent to offences from graffiti to terrorism, hate crime is also symbolic in terms of seeking to reinforce social divisions that exist beyond the specific features of the particular offence itself.

Some of these debates have been discussed in recent scholarship exploring the potential categorisation of VAWG as a form of hate crime (Gill and Mason-Bish, 2013; Walters and Tumath, 2014). Problems with the concept of hate as an explanatory framework apply in particular ways to violence against women and girls. Gill and Mason-Bish (2013: 11) argue that ascribing the concept of 'hate' to certain forms of violence against women that are predominantly perpetrated by women (they cite FGM as an example) might not be 'in the spirit of hate crime legislation'. They also note that personal relationships between perpetrators and victims of VAWG mark this offending as distinct from established types of hate crime. Coupled with this, Gill and Mason-Bish (2013) dispute the frequent claim that VAWG is distinct from hate crime on the grounds that it tends to occur in a private rather than a public setting. They note a body of research that suggests that many incidents of hate crime are perpetrated in private domains by perpetrators who are known to victims, as family members, friends, carers, and so on. While this is an important point, we argue further below that this private/public dichotomy is considerably more problematic in the context of the online abuse of women who responded to our survey. Walters and Tumath's (2014) review of the literature on rape, sexual violence and hate crime reflects the wider point made above that categorisation of some behaviour plays a normative role in terms of symbolising the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. In terms of the symbolic dimension of rape and sexual violence they note a recurring theme within the research literature that such offences do – as with hate crime – serve as forms of terrorism intended to instil fear across the wider community (Walters and Tumath, 2014: 574-5). This point reflects Pain's (2014) argument that domestic violence can be considered a form of 'everyday terrorism' and the radical feminist framing of violence against women, from Brownmiller (1975) onwards, as a signal offence which 'operates to sustain the systemic subordination of women within society' (Gelber, 2000). The extent to which the online misogynistic abuse identified in our paper has a comparable role in terms of seeking to intimidate women from the 'cyber commons' of web-based space is explored at greater length further below where we argue that this might be the intention but our respondents suggest it might be counter-productive in practice.

Some core themes emerge from the above, inevitably selective, review – and it is around these central issues that our data is organised in the discussion below. First, respondent's reflections on the nature of 'hate' within the abuse that they have experienced is considered. It is noted that experiences of online abuse are implicitly judged to have greater impact, and to be more hateful, because of the enhanced level of threat relative to experiences of abuse in real world contexts.

However, while it is true that the relative anonymity of the online environment often meant that victims could not identify the perpetrator of abuse with certainty, this was clearly not always the case and respondents reflected on the identity and motivation of their abuser(s) in ways that reveal important qualifications about the nature of 'hate' in these communications. The intersectional nature of much of the abuse reflected upon by our respondents was often evident. Women were threatened and abused using homophobic or racist language: proponents were not specialists in misogyny. This challenge applies to real world hate crimes, as McPhail (2012) pointed out in the US context, the rape of a woman is not a hate crime unless the victim was targeted on the basis of the perpetrator's bias against minorities, on the basis of sexual orientation, disability, or other protected characteristics. She argued that gender-bias was of secondary status in the hierarchy of hate crime and that in the US this partly reflected patriarchal ideology and a pragmatic agenda of not pursuing legislative protection for dimensions of hate crime that might prove controversial.

Second, the symbolic and exclusionary intent of hate crime was clearly identified by many respondents in our research. Unlike established categories of hate crime the online abuse experienced by our respondents did not have an exclusionary intent in physical or geographical sense but instead in terms of being silenced in or denied access to the online community.

Thirdly we discuss the fuzzy boundaries between online and offline experiences. Consideration of the space in which offending occurs has grown in criminological theory and research in recent decades. Studies in environmental criminology and the importance of physical location, architecture, urban planning, and crime prevention technology notwithstanding it remains the case that space is under-theorised in much of the literature (Campbell, 2016). The assumption that space exists only in two-dimensional terms, is surrounded by boundaries, and has relatively fixed shape and dimensions is implicit in much criminological work, and Campbell (2016) argued effectively for a more sophisticated approach that understands space in relational and social terms. Given this, it is important to consider how online territories are imagined and how they relate to off-line 'real world' environments.

Findings

Problems with concept of hate

Respondents to our survey and some of those interviewed spoke of their experiences in terms of hate crime. Although questions were not asked directly about hate crime or whether that discourse characterised what had happened to them, concepts and terminology from that framework were drawn upon by some as they reflected on the abuse they had received. One woman interviewed

explained that because the abuse she had received was based on her 'born characteristics' it amounted to hate crime since 'this is what hate speech is'. A survey respondent argued that misogynistic abuse is not considered as seriously as other forms of offending because of endemic sexism:

[the] mens' legal system and mens' police forces aren't interested in prosecuting women-hating males who threaten women with male violence because only white men's racism against non-white men and heterosexual male insults levied at homosexual males is supposedly 'real hate crimes'! (Respondent 122)

While 'hate' was seen by many victims to characterise the motivation of abusers it does not necessarily follow that all misogynistic offending can be characterised in such terms. Firstly, the nature of intersectional identity meant that respondents sometimes reflected on their experiences of gendered abuse as a form of hate speech but noted that their racialized identity or perceived sexuality was connoted in the language and terminology used. Women suggested that they were subject to sexist hate crime but in ways that drew upon other offensive tropes. Recipients of abuse reflected on what defined abusive and offensive comments directed towards them, but rarely reported that they distinguished one element from others in terms of intersectional identity. One interviewee reflected that:

So, you know, the abusive stuff I think isn't up for question, you know, if somebody is threatening to kill you or rape you or do something to your family or burn your house down all this kind of stuff, then I don't think there's any kind of, um, question mark over that being abusive. The offensive stuff is more difficult I think to quantify u know, um, you know, some men might go, Okay, it's offensive ...

(Interview 1)

During one interview a respondent described the cumulative impact of the abuse she received online and offline:

A lot of these were people starting to become slightly racist in the language they were sending and so I got my husband to look at some of them, he said, "I want to delete these, I don't ever want you to look at them" and I asked him to leave them because one day I will be strong enough to look at them but because my address is public I started to get these letters and I got an incredible set of letters which were very racially motivated ... So then eventually [my employer] suddenly

realised what was going on with my post and they then start to filter and take the post away and deal with it and agree to send any stuff which is racist, or sexist, or death threats to the police, and they said, "We're not going to tell you what we're doing because you don't need to know this" because I'd got so that I was like beside myself, I wasn't sleeping, I felt really fearful the whole time. (Interview 12)

The intersectionality of prejudice embodied in the extracts above suggests that debate about whether misogynistic incidents ought to be considered as hate crimes becomes more complex since the prejudicial motivation of perpetrators is often multidimensional. A victim-focused response needs to recognise that offending is experienced in a wider social, cultural and personal context, and related to other forms of marginalisation, that mean that the impact is not due to isolated components. Racist, homophobic, or disablist hatred is exacerbated by combination with misogyny but in ways that are unpredictable, mediated by context, and cannot be read simply from textual, visual or graphical content.

Further to the discussion about 'hate crime and mate crime' that was noted above in relation to many of the experiences of crimes targeting disabled people, our respondents sometimes reflected on the apparent inconsistencies and contradictions in terms of the position of perpetrators. Unlike victims of some other forms of hate crime, respondents to our survey rarely reported that they had any personal relation with the perpetrator (61 per cent of survey respondents said that the perpetrator was a stranger). However, since the focus of our study was abuse perpetrated on social media, victims were able to view the profile of perpetrators. Often this capacity created opportunities for resisting misogyny: we found that efforts to use abuse to marginalise women from public discussion often had precisely the opposite effect (as is discussed more fully below). One reason for this was that those experiencing online abuse were often engaged in networks of feminist activists and were able to compare their experiences with those of others and to identify common perpetrators who become well-known within the online community. Exploration of the online self-representation of perpetrators led one respondent to reflect on the difficulty of assigning the concept of 'hate' to their abusive comments:

it was the type of people ... what was quite shocking because the demographic was largely um fairly young boys between about fifteen and twenty five who were the main culprits . . . They'd have their arms round girlfriends you know in their pictures, that's what shocked me, that they would have arms around their own loved females whilst targeting another female and downgrading other females and calling them *and they would have their arm*

around the woman you love and then there are the other types of people that did it were um sort of those forty year old men with a baby in their arms saying, "You"
" (Interview 16)

Similar points have been made about the problematic application of the concept of hate in relation to racist crimes. Ray et al (2004), for example, argued that the perpetrators they had interviewed were motivated by a combination of resentment, shame and grievance rather than 'racial hatred' in a pure form. As a heuristic device, hate does not capture the complex and contradictory gendered construction of appropriate social identities that was foundational to the abuse uncovered in our research. Perpetrators seemed not to hate women in a categorical sense but rather to be motivated by a perception that women engaging in feminist debate were transgressing appropriate gender roles. In terms of considering the online abuse of women as a form of hate crime, our data suggest that this is problematic but in ways that are complex and challenging in relation to other offence types that have been categorised as hate crime.

Exclusionary intent

As mentioned, our research participants very clearly interpreted the abuse that they received as an attempt to silence their participation in online debate. The abusive speech and images had literal communicative properties but also covertly signalled that women ought not to be engaged in the free exchange of ideas on social media. In many ways this reflects the signalling component of hate crime, a defining element that gives such offences more gravity and makes them more impactful. Respondents were asked about incidents of online abuse that they had experienced and very often the starting point for their description was some contribution they had made to discussion on social media. In many cases, the abusive response was wildly out of proportion with the initial contribution (e.g. a comment about a pink stationery item generated hundreds of abusive comments), but respondents implicitly couched their experience as a response to an activity they had engaged in. Perpetrators were responding to the vocal presence of women online and their feminist contributions to public debate. While there was a broad range of testimony, the extracts below illustrate the common trend that the abuse was framed as a response to something the recipient had initially voiced:

I had used a hashtag when discussing a recent news event and started to receive hostile or derailing tweets from racist and anti-feminist users who appeared to be

monitoring the hashtag in order to prevent feminists having an uninterrupted discussion with each other. (Respondent 115)

I was quoted in a press article speaking out about violence against women. The Facebook newspaper page included (not anon individuals) comments like 'she needs a good kicking in the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to sort her out' ... 'someone should shut her up by sticking [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I could go on and on giving examples of the abuse posted. (Respondent 185)

In terms of the impact of online abuse directed at respondents to our study, it was clear that the exclusionary intent of perpetrators tended not to be realised. Indeed, the opposite outcome emerged from our results. The survey revealed a majority of women felt 'galvanised' by their experience and far from being silenced became more vocal in their political activism. Fifty four per cent agreed it made them 'more determined in your political views'. A third (33%) agreed it made them feel motivated to continue to engage in debate. Moreover, while negative impacts, such as anger, worry, vulnerability, fear and sadness reduced over time, feelings of being galvanised to act increased over time. This challenges the idea that online abuse 'silences' women; but it was clearly perceived by our respondents that this was the intention of perpetrators. Our findings complicate the notion that online abuse 'silences' women, but it is worth noting that this galvanising effect may be more evident in this sample of feminists than in the wider population of women. It may be that women who are engaged in feminist debate draw on a feminist analysis to understand their experiences, whereas women less or not at all familiar with a feminist politics of abuse and feminist networks, might have fewer resources to draw on when dealing with online abuse and might feel silenced by it. Even in our sample, the galvanising effect was found alongside reports that women changed their online behaviour, limiting their engagement in selected sites or debates. Clearly it is not a matter of recipients of abuse being *either* silenced *or* galvanised; both consequences may co-exist.

Beard (2013) blogged about her own experiences of being abused on line and argued that contemporary concerns continue long-standing 'cultural awkwardness' about women's public voice and participation in civil society. This study was focused on women who participated in feminist debate online and so wider conclusions cannot be drawn about the more general experience of misogynistic abuse. In this context though there was a clear exclusionary intent behind abuse intended to debar participation held to transgress acceptable gender norms. In this respect it appears that the experiences of victims of online misogyny parallel other forms of hate crime

victimisation targeted at those held to be 'out of place' in terms of their physical presence in real-world environments. An important contribution from Chakraborti and Garland's (2004) study was that the 'othering' process aimed at minority ethnic people combined a sense of localism, racism and a concept of authentic belonging in rural communities. Other studies of racist abuse (most notably Bowling, 1999 and Hesse, 1992) have identified the white territorialism that suggests minority communities are not a legitimate presence in certain neighbourhoods.

In relation to this second feature of debate relating to hate crime, our data suggest that the misogynistic abuse of women online clearly did have an exclusionary intent. This took a particular form in that women were not, it appears, intended to be excluded in absolute categorical terms. Further research usefully could examine the extent to which this 'conditional exclusionary intent' applies to other forms of hate speech and also the response of victims to this. Our results found that recipients were far from silenced but were galvanised by their experiences.

The 'fuzzy boundaries' between online and offline space

While it has just been noted that online abuse of women and other forms of hate crime share in common that perpetrators are intending to signal an exclusionary message to those that they target, a key point of difference is the spatial context in which the different types of offence occur. While hate crimes do not always occur in the public domain, many of those that are intended to have a wider impact on the target community are conducted in such a way as to deliver a visible message.

As Awan and Zempi (2016) demonstrated in relation to Islamophobic hate crime, online and offline space are best considered as a continuum rather than distinct domains. Their argument was based, in part, on the notion that victims do not clearly distinguish their online victimisation from that in the real world: both form part of a whole experience. This point is reinforced by our research data as many of our respondents spoke of threatening experiences such that online 'talk' was directed towards off-line real world assaults of an extreme kind. A respondent to our survey described how online responses to her engagement in media reporting of VAWG resulted in abuse:

I got an email from [name] one evening, I was sat with my partner and I got an email from [name] and the subject of the email was 'please tell me this is not your address'; and I had taken a break from Twitter for an hour ... and he had posted my home address in full online immediately after he had sent a tweet saying,

Similarly, the following respondent's account demonstrates the intersection of on and offline experiences:

he named the train station local to me in an oblique way. Later on the same forum he had a conversation with himself about making a special visit to a particular person (me) & named the station he'd be catching the train to. This man is a known rapist...He specified his visit would take place over the w/e. The police advised me not to stay alone at my home - or, if I did, to phone them if I heard any odd noises. I live alone so of course it unnerved me. I consider myself to be strong & independent, but he managed to intimidate and frighten me.

(Respondent 85)

It seems that the police responded in the second instance above, and the continuum between online and offline abuse provides a clear imperative for the criminal justice system and other agencies (social media companies for example) to treat online abuse seriously. Not only is the abuse reported by our respondents not 'just speech' in the sense that it can be directly linked to offline crime threats but it is also significant in terms of reinforcing patriarchal gendered norms that form the 'wallpaper of sexism' that helps to normalise misogynistic abuse more generally (Lewis et al, 2015). The links between real world VAWG and social media environments are significant to offences of 'coercive control'. The Crown Prosecution Service guidelines on communications via social media stipulate that 'online activity is used to humiliate, control and threaten victims, as well as to plan and orchestrate acts of violence' (CPS, 2016) but a recent survey suggests the justice system is failing to adequately address this new form of coercive control (Travis, 2017).

The boundaries between online and offline offending are further blurred in relation to the activities of perpetrators. Just as Ray et al (2004) noted that those involved in racist hate crimes are rarely specialists in violence and so perpetrate violent acts in other forms, so too those who engage in online offending might commit offences in the real world too. Whether they are emboldened to do so by their online experiences or would commit such real-world crimes in any event is an important question but one that remains beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, other evidence suggests that those engaged in online misogyny do so too in offline environments: Williams (2006) study of sexual predators in online environments found that some perpetrators had offended in 'real world' situations that are incontrovertibly the domain of law enforcement agencies.

If considered as social, rather than literal, spaces then the public/private dichotomy between online and real world environments is less significant (Campbell, 2016). The communicative properties of misogynistic speech might be limited to a primary recipient in its initial format (depending on the

social media platform) or to a restricted group of members in a forum. However the capacity of perpetrators to target multiple victims and of multiple perpetrators to target single victims (what Jane, 2017:4) calls 'cyber lynch mobs') is hugely enhanced in online environments, even if each instance is still directed at a single individual. A respondent (#130) reported that a single abuser had engaged a much larger number of perpetrators: 'one person 'set' their 10k followers on me for talking about radical feminism'. A minority of respondents reported very high volumes of abuse from a large number of perpetrators:

I took a picture of a pink office supply item advertised as "for women" and made a sarcastic comment about how now women can work too and tagged #everydaysexism in an attempt to point out even these little things are still a representation of sexism. This was immediately shared by GamerGate all over Twitter, Reddit, and various other sites. Within a few hours it had over 25,000 views and 650 abusive comments on Reddit not including the comments on Twitter. My picture, name, twitter handle, location, profession, were all shared. I feared for my online security as Gamergate is known to hack people's accounts. It took days before I could get moderators to remove my personal information that was shared across sites. I was threatened with rape, abuse, etc. (Respondent 126)

That our study found many instances of women sharing messages amongst their networks, often as a coping mechanism, also meant that social media was at once a private and a public space.

In terms of this third aspect of hate crime research, the place in which our respondents experienced misogynistic abuse was significant; as it is in 'real world' environments. That the abuse was virtual did not lessen its impact because, in many cases reported, there was a clear link between online and offline worlds since both abuse and misogyny in general terms were experienced in both environments. Moreover, the private space of online communication was breached in various ways as abusive content was shared within networks that are an important site of political and social activism for our respondents.

Conclusion

Having identified three key components of extant debates about the nature of hate crime, the discussion above has considered the ways in which each of those might 'play out' in relation to our findings from victims of online misogynistic abuse. We have noted above that the concept of hate is itself problematic when applied to this type of offending. However, the complexities we have identified are similar in character to those related to forms of hate crime that are broadly recognised

in research, policy and legal terms. Second, we have shown that there is a very clear theme that misogynistic abuse has an exclusionary intent that is shared by established forms of hate crime. What also emerges from our study is that this exclusionary intent may not have been absolute and categorical but was often limited in the sense that women should be 'silenced' when transgressing patriarchal gendered norms. It was also clear that although the abuse represented an attempt at silencing it was frequently unsuccessful. A majority of our respondents reported that – despite short term negative impacts – they became more committed to political engagement in the long term in defiance of the abuse that they had received. Thirdly, we found the location of the abuse was significant, as with many forms of hate crime, but that the distinction between private online spaces and public real world sites is unhelpful. There was no binary hierarchy such that the offline world was more significant than online spaces but rather, following other research, we found that the two were continuous. In broad terms, our analysis suggests that the online misogynistic abuse of women in our survey *could* be understood and categorised as a form of hate crime. The remainder of this concluding section moves on to consider the consequential question: *should* online misogyny be considered a hate crime?

In addressing this question, we join scholars and activists who have considered wider questions of including gender, and specifically, violence against women and girls, in hate crime legislation. This dialogue points out the risks to so doing. For example, Gelber (2000) highlights the operational risk that, given widespread normalisation of violence against women whereby traditionally it has not been viewed as a crime, leniency in applying hate crime legislation would prevail and convictions would be *more* difficult to secure. Moreover, the justice system's failure to recognise intersecting identities and to instead insist on singular identity categories does not suggest an ability to develop nuanced responses to abuse on the grounds of more than one identity category. Similar to Chakraborti et al. (2014) we found considerable evidence that multiple identity characteristics were targeted by abusers. There are also more philosophical risks; Moran (2001), in considering particularly homophobic violence, cautions against invoking the 'violence' of the law that has oppressed, excluded and denied justice to the very group who would seek its defence. However, this abstentionist position prioritises a theoretical analysis of legal intervention over the lived experience of those victimised online and undervalues the gains that have been made through 'working the spaces' of legal institutions and discourses. In addition, there are pragmatic reasons against a hate crime approach to VAWG; the long struggle to have such crimes recognised as matters for public, political and judicial concern reminds us that attempts to reframe it as a hate crime risk diluting some of those gains made, including resources which have been made available for work around specific form such as sexual assault or domestic violence. Alternatively, there are also concerns that

if VAWG is conceptualised as a hate crime the sheer number of offences might detract time and resources from hate crimes against minorities

However, the specific type of violence against women which is the focus of this paper – misogynistic online abuse – (see Lewis, Rowe and Wiper, 2016 for a discussion of online abuse as a form of violence against women) presents a valuable opportunity to explore engagement with the hate crime framework, without jeopardising progress made in criminalising VAWG more generally. When other forms of crime that are motivated by hate or prejudice are treated as hate crime, the failure to treat misogynistic online abuse as such – especially given the often explicit and extreme hatred of women expressed - is an anomaly that reinforces problematic notions that gender-based crime is a distinct category that does not quite fit with other forms of prejudice and hate. Naming online misogynistic abuse as a form of hate crime challenges the normalisation of VAWG that has led to its marginalisation from the justice system. Similarly, the argument that legal structures deal inadequately with intersecting identities, goes beyond hate crime and victimisation of women and girls and is a live debate. Relating this debate to online hate crime helps progress these debates and their potential to create more nuanced legal responses. Feminism has revealed the long history of marginalisation of women and women's needs by the legal system, *inter alia*. The definition of hate crime (e.g. as committed by strangers in public) through the exclusion of consideration of gender as a factor is an example of that marginalisation. Rather than tolerating that marginalisation, resisting it by asserting that misogynistic online abuse is a form of hate crime, renders visible the prevalence, normalisation and mundanity of misogyny. We argue, from a sceptical but pragmatic position, that engaging in the debate about misogynistic online abuse as a form of hate crime supports existing critical engagement with the law; engaging is another way of being part of efforts to transform legal discourse and practice. Moreover, as debates about how to respond to online abuse are in their infancy, now is the moment to ensure inclusion of gender in these debates.

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Martin Atherton

Dear Lord Bew,

I understand that the Prime Minister has asked you to report on why politicians attract so much hate these days. Please ask her to reflect on the following:

- · Extreme politics provoke extreme reactions.
- · Pursuing Brexit at any cost and without a super-majority in favour when it is clearly doing massive damage to the economy is extreme politics.
- · Allowing MPs to tell lies to the country (e.g. the NHS funding promise on the red bus) is extreme politics.
- · Appointing a Foreign Secretary who specialises in insulting foreign leaders is extreme politics.
- · Allowing the gutter press to attack foreigners, judges (the “Enemies of the People” front page) and anyone else they hate will stimulate extreme reactions.
- Politicians actively or passively encouraging xenophobia will provoke extreme reactions.
-

Is it OK to agree with David Cameron that members of the cabinet should be strapped to a raft and sent off down a very dangerous river?

I suggest the solution is to be found at Westminster.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Atherton

17th July 2017

Dear Lord Bew,

Unfortunately I did not hear your discussion on BBC Radio 4 Westminster Hour, but read your comments on my I-Pad news.

Everything, which I read, resonated with me. I have been appalled by what has been going on during this election campaign. There has been/ is so much intolerance/ anger from people whose views and opinions differ from our own.

I do hope and pray that you will bring your past experience, knowledge, understanding and discernment to your enquiries, but also that you, too, will be protected from the likely fall-out and that you could receive from people.

I thought that your sentence 'it is perfectly, obvious that the way, in which the culture of civility in this county has been eroded, comes from a number of difference sources, "was so accurate and summed what we are in danger of losing as a nation – tolerance and all the associated aspects of democracy, which we, perhaps, have taken for granted.

However I do not think we should be surprised. The following description of society is relevant – personally I think it could have been written yesterday.

'There will be times of stress. For men will be lovers of reef, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderous, profligate, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion, but not the power of it'

Written by a political journalist yesterday

No – by the apostle Paul to Timothy in his letter to Timothy chapter 3, verses 1-5. Times my change, but the heart of men does not.

I shall pray for you and your committee in the days ahead that God will indeed guide and bless you.

Yours sincerely.

E Abel (Mrs)

Ian Jones

Dear Lord Bew,

I very seldom, these days, indulge in correspondence except to offer unheeded or ill-received, advice to members of my family.

However, I do feel moved to write, if only to state the obvious, to you regarding the present alarming abuse of parliamentarians and would-be parliamentarians.

I, and many (most?) of my friends look on with grave concern at the decline in standards of public behaviour, respect and interpersonal relations all of which, of course, seriously undermine the quality of life and the foundations of democracy itself. We doubt whether our pessimism is wholly associated with the weariness of age; and we do have very real fears regarding our children and grandchildren in a future we will not see.

Personally, I find it remarkable that the politicians now expressing high levels of righteous indignation are so oblivious to their own contribution to the corruption of public life. I think the pertinent section of the Gospel according to St. Matthew refers to hypocrisy, beams and motes. The political classes might do well to consider it- it is probably short enough to Tweet.

* Are these people not aware of the contempt in which reasonable people view their public behaviour at Prime Minister's Question Time in the House of Commons?

* Do they not understand how little respect much of the rest of their behaviour engenders? It was, after all, if I am not mistaken, the current Foreign Secretary who, apparently unashamedly, told a taxi driver to,

* Do they overlook the misinformation and character assassination they embraced in the recent E.U. referendum?

* Do they regard the population as being so universally stupid that it cannot identify dissembling, the cult of celebrity, the obvious networks of relationships with media and corporatism, the elevation of the ego?

I write more in anger than despair. I know of, and have worked with, many fine public servants and honest and sincere politicians. Sadly, these are often the people who have, unjustly, been abused and bullied by the very people now wallowing in public self-pity.

My compatriot, Will Paynter, once wrote that, "You cannot abdicate leadership."

There is little evidence that the current generation of politicians understand the concept or principles of leadership. No wonder, then, that the least intelligent, least assimilated, least motivated in society stoop to the levels of behaviour immaculately modelled by the Advantaged.

In keeping with the spirit of the times, Mrs. May has referred the problem to you. At least part of the solution lies with her and her peers.

It's called Setting an Example.

Yours Sincerely,
Ian Jones

Jill Prince

Dear Lord Bew

I am contacting you in the hope that you can help with something I feel very strongly about. You may believe that intimidation and bullying of MPs and political candidates is a threat to democracy but I believe there is a far greater threat. The lax attitude towards the content of political slogans and posters is particularly damaging. Exaggeration, lies and false promises are used by political parties with impunity. It is an accepted system of fighting any election. It needs to stop, now, before there are any more elections.

The advertising standards authority scrutinises radio, tv and other advertisements. We all know that an ad has to be legal, honest and truthful. Candidates and political parties can say and promise whatever they want as long as there is no slander or libel involved. This is NOT good enough. In the recent General Election my local MP displayed large posters proclaiming "a better, more secure future" if we voted for him. He had no right to make such promises without evidence that he could fulfil them. I am still waiting for my life to be "better"! While there are no standards politicians can stoop as low as the please.

Who knows what difference the awful lies told by the Leave campaigners made to the EU referendum result. Even afterwards Boris Johnson said "we will be perfectly okay when we leave the EU" How can he promise that? What proof does he have that we will be perfectly okay? Prices are rising, the pound is falling and businesses are either making plans to transfer to EU countries or complaining they can't find enough staff. Does he not know the meaning of the word "okay"?

Parliament needs to make time to debate this issue and get some regulations in place as soon as possible. It has to put an end to this nonsense. We have the right to be able to believe what our politicians are saying. The EU negotiators need to be able to believe the UK negotiators or what hope is there for us?

Please do what you can to improve this appalling state of affairs.

Best wishes
Jill Prince

Intimidation of parliamentary candidates review

1. It would appear that frequency and ferocity of such intimidating and threatening contact with elected members, whether for Parliament or local government, has worsened in recent years. Whilst such communication is wrong and abhorrent and needs to be stifled and stopped, it is important that in so doing any remedial action does not thwart desires to express opinion to or about elected representatives, even where the language used may cause offence. Being democratically elected should not make one immune to critique and comment from the public however they choose to express that within the bounds of legality.
2. I feel it is highly likely that the increase in intimidation has multiple causes, one of which is likely to be the reflection of the disdain that recent governments and representatives of all national parties have shown to the public. A culture has developed that seems to make it OK to lie or issue untruths publicly, to deliberately mislead or misrepresent issues and to alienate the ruling bodies from those they serve through decisions that impact on the most vulnerable; for some this results in a reduction in respect and faith in the democratic system, generates anger and frustration with a system rigged against the vulnerable in favour of the rich and powerful.
3. I believe the proliferation of social media platforms has contributed to the rise in threats and intimidation of individuals in general and includes those elected representatives. Social media has made it easier to contact those one disagrees with or is viewed as causing harm through their decisions and voting records directly, social media platforms enables unplanned, impulsive comment to reach its target; whereas previously a penned missive entailed numerous opportunities to rethink and change approaches or presented barriers which many would not or could not be bothered to overcome. Hence the rise of the 'keyboard warrior', identification hidden behind profile names and proxy servers, anonymity generates a culture of 'say what you want, to who you want and damn the consequences'.
A remedy of ensuring social media platform providers only enable content from verified, identified individuals, is unlikely as it would soon lose customers for platform providers and the finance generating potential that goes with those huge numbers. Any remedy for enhanced reporting of intimidating and inflammatory comments through social media would be rapidly clogged up by victims from all walks of life who face the same issues daily; and a special response for MPs or elected members would only serve to widen the gaps and feed senses of detachment and unfairness that are driving the problem. I would not advocate for either, but would advocate for an increase in policing of existing legislation regarding threats and libel, but again needs to be in the form of justice available to all not just the ruling class.
4. Existing legislation should be sufficient had authorities got the capacity to Police them appropriately. Currently it is difficult to get complaints about threat and intimidation to be heard, such that many victims do not bother to try and continue to suffer in silence or remove themselves from the platform. I do not see why the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates is any different from that of Councillors, public servants in any capacity or of any member of the public. It is wrong, whoever it is directed at.
5. All parties should be very clear that they condemn such practice or behaviour, exclude those found guilty from their party ranks regardless of who their target was. The existing Committee or other relevant committee could seek a cross party sub-group to consider the issues that drive individuals to have such extreme responses to the political messages of candidates and learn from findings and publicly announce measures to reduce the unwanted behaviours or changes to how representatives communicate with those they supposedly represent.

6. It would be helpful to stop seeing this as a problem only being faced by those taking part in democratic processes and consider the societal impact for all victims of this type of behaviour. The very fact that the problem is being dressed up as an issue for those in office or seeking office is likely to be contributing to the distance many feel between those in office and those they claim to serve.
7. I think many would consider the issue to be a drawback of standing for office, but the benefits continue to considerably outweigh the negatives of standing; so doubt many would find the threat and intimidation sufficient to prevent them seeking to serve or seeking those benefits of office and joining the ruling elite. Celebrities, actors, football stars all complain of the negatives of fame, but rarely do we see any remove themselves from the public eye, the benefits continue to be larger than the negatives
8. I continue to enjoy positive healthy communications with my representative through email and occasional letter correspondence. I am not aware of them having a social media account and do not see the necessity for public officers to use social media to communicate; it is not a social communication from them, it would be a business or official communication from them with numerous existing methods and platforms available for that to occur. I wonder whether changes to parliamentary candidate behaviour or use of social media rather than changes to social media or legislation might be a more prudent approach.
9. Historically individuals have aired their displeasures and even made loose threats or expressed desires to harm in a variety of fora, talking with friends, workmates, down the pub, even through local political groups or activist groups; but rarely did they have the opportunity to confront those that irritated, annoyed or felt were causing them harm through their involvement in the democratic processes. Years ago you might have heard individuals with extreme views about how they would stop candidates carrying out their work, but because there was no direct link to the candidate nothing came of. So now the loud aggressor that used to prop up the bar espousing their own simplistic responses, is suddenly given a platform where not only can they share their extreme views and be rude to and argue with those of opposite views, they can find a direct line to the office of individual elected members they vehemently disagree with. So instead of saying 'the world would be better without xxxx' and being ignored and nothing coming of it, they can now threaten how the world is going to be without xxxx and xxxx gets to hear it. It's always happened, its always been wrong but it is now being heard directly by candidates and elected members and accordingly has a more sinister feel and offends or intimidates the individual concerned.
10. I am a member of the public, the views are entirely my own and I do not represent any others. I have held local council office but not stood for parliament. I see this as an issue for all not just candidates or elected officers.
i am happy to be named in the report or to be contacted for further discussion/comment if felt appropriate.
Mr Norman Cooper

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-40717230>

An inquiry into the issue was announced by the standards watchdog earlier in July, and began its consultation this week.

How apposite.

<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/parliamentary-commissioner-for-standards/complaints-and-investigations/allegations-under-investigation-by-the-commissioner/>

I can see nothing on the website as yet regarding that inquiry - may I please request that my thoughts be considered by way of inclusion if that inquiry is open to public consultation?

The entire 'abuse' question is one I am very closely aligned to - when for the most part, it is one's perception of that which is abusive that creates so many of the issues and which, for some reason, MPs themselves have deemed to be worthy of highlighting.

It does not mean that abuses do not occur, when clearly, that some do is not in doubt. It is the hows and whys those issues arise to begin with that I believe so many of those who complain of being targeted either genuinely do not understand, or who refuse to take greater responsibility for their own behaviour, that is what causes those 'abuses' to arise in the first place.

Put simply, the public elect representatives to stand for them in Parliament. This is the first bone of contention - when in more recent times (perhaps it has always been thus, or is more evident now) - candidates are not actually selected by the people in the fullest sense but are instead presented with a candidate whom they can choose to vote for, or not.

It is the 'imposition' that most riles people. The candidate who may be put forward, if there has been any orchestration beforehand cannot then suggest they were not aware of this 'outside help' - yet when people, who may feel cheated by such interference wish to contest such things, there is no means to do so. The response will be 'you get what you voted for'. If that is true, it is also disingenuous for the refusal to allow candidates to be the people's choice in the full meaning of the word 'choice'.

If people feel cheated, they will become disenfranchised, ultimately, this results in those candidates who are elected to in effect, be elected into office because of political reasons, rather than having been solely elected because the people chose them.

If this scenario is repeated often enough, presumably with scant consideration being afforded as to how the public would view such interference when it has the consequence of altering or skewing their views, or not allows them to be heard at all, over time, this is what most causes a build-up of friction to become evident, none more so than the friction that occurred with the vote regarding Brexit.

What is so interesting about that vote compared to all other democratic votes is that those who voted to Leave were from all political persuasions. It could be said that because they wanted it to happen, they were able to observe some of the issues at hand, causing them to take the stance they did i.e. to vote to Leave the EU.

Those who voted to Remain also had their votes garnered from all political persuasions.

Instead of, broadly speaking, two major political parties battling for the votes of the people, instead what happened was that the vote was still split down the middle but not in the usual or anticipated sense. Instead of the Conservatives being in power and Labour being in Opposition or vice versa, what happened instead was a split established in either conservative with a lower-case c principles, and those with liberal principles, again with a lower-case l not a capital one.

It was this split i.e. the nature of it which is what most caused any chasm to be revealed. Some may wish to suggest that Brexit caused that split - however, the divide could only emerge at all because it was the liberal elites i.e. those who govern, who 'lost' - meaning that the public 'won' - and as such this is what caused an awful lot of salt to be rubbed into an awful lot of egos - made worse by the fact that those who did not foresee or prepare in any way for such an eventuality as Brexit were the ruling elites themselves - the counter-argument then being 'well, why did you not prepare for it (you arrogant bastards)?'

If 'teacher' comes into the class unprepared, it will not rest well with the children who are expecting to be taught. As such, those children will become restive, irritated, outspoken, perhaps even downright rude - and so it is with politicians, many of whom in the public's perception are ill- or unprepared, seemingly ignorant of current world facts, and also seemingly unwilling or unable to acknowledge tensions which may be underlying but which do not pose a threat and only become one if they are adversely highlighted.

If tensions are given undue prominence this will always makes matters worse. The notion becomes then that 'politicians' care only for that which is trivial, or minor - whilst ignoring that which is not, at the expense not just of some but of us all.

People understand that policies can be challenged. They may not know how to challenge them but they will understand that if they do not like or agree with something, it can be changed in a lawful manner.

However, if those who represent the people are not the people's representatives in the fullest sense, or do not reflect their views sufficiently, to whom or where can people turn? If one answer is to Twitter - then whose 'fault' is it if 'politicians' are then targeted by by now - angry people?

Is it not the politicians' greater responsibility for their failure or refusal to be willing to be more accountable, who place agendas before the will and desire of the people which are often contrasting - or is the the people's fault for reacting to those failures?

It is the presence of any imposition at all which is what most antagonises people. It is the presumption (it seems) by all too many politicians that would suggest people are guilty from the outset and must be punished accordingly, when their reaction to MPs is mostly to the resistance they are met with that would prohibit them from being able or allowed to express their views freely or more freely to begin with (I would add with the caveat 'if also responsibly'). 'Hope Not Hate' is a prime example when the inference implied by its name is that if you do not agree or concur with such rhetoric, it means you are a hate-filled person - thereby making an unfounded accusation from the outset about that which cannot be known.

Yet the Bible (and presumably, all other religious texts) speaks of 'hope' (lower-case h) - as something altogether more positive. No religious dogma embraces a 'Hope Not Hate' ethos when to do so would come with an automatic presumption, accusation or declaration of guilt attached. The irony of this particular group being that one of the groups they endorse is White Helmets - put another way, Al Qaeda (I have made this known to a number of politicians already - previously).

If then, the message is 'Hope Not Hate' which may encourage 'Hope/hope' to be present, it is because of the additional words 'Not Hate' which further or also imply that any person who disagrees or finds themselves to be not in agreement is therefore hate-filled that is what causes anger to also be present or to emerge. As such, it is the message itself which is wrong, not those who may react to it.

Were the message one which encouraged or endorsed 'Hope/hope' as one word, this would be far more positive and people could choose to respond or not respond as the case may be and would be able to do so without finding themselves explicitly accused of something that is either not true, not warranted or simply wrong. The message 'Hope Not Hate' will always elicit a far greater reaction from people for the simple reason it comes with an inherent accusation or threat attached - whereas a message of hope is far gentler, allowing for a 'response' instead of a 'reaction' to be made.

Many MPs, perhaps borne of frustration themselves, fail to acknowledge the implicit trust which has been placed in them by the people, even as some of those MPs are not the choice whom the electorate would have wished for. If those MPs then speak out, airing their 'views' - when views are not policy, when if a code of conduct is breached, it can be challenged - many of those who express their views should not then be surprised if people reply with something that usually ends with 'off'.

If the people who react this way are then challenged for their actions, which by now are REactions, it is they who will be held to account for what are mostly minor transgressions and not the MPs who caused that wrath to begin with.

If MPs wish for respect, it must first be earned, it is never a given. Yet many of those who complain of being 'abused' neither understand what abuse is, or are willing to exhibit respect towards others - if they did, they would not then be 'abused' by way of return.

There can be little doubt that in many people's minds, many MPs are 'stupid'. Many of those MPs deemed to be lacking in common-sense, purpose or knowledge are women but not all of them. It is the ones who most elicit or express contempt who fail to understand that if they wish to be treated with the respect they believe they deserve, they should first be willing to demonstrate it towards other people - which may mean keeping quiet, or keeping their views to themselves or not expressing them publicly, or not promoting views if it is understood they will provoke discontent but are publicised anyway for the sole reason that an MP has a status and platform afforded to them by their office.

This does not mean that contentious views cannot be debated or discussed - they should be. The issue is that MPs who most complain about the public's reaction to them are the very people who most abuse their position, who believe that it is because they are an MP that this somehow gives them a right to ride roughshod over all those who do not have such a platform but whose views are just as valid, if only to them.

Values, beliefs and principles are worth upholding and fighting for. The great tragedy being that in many people's eyes, it is MPs themselves who would say otherwise, who would seek to alter or distort those values, or diminish them in some way.

(If you are not already aware of it, under the 'Current Inquiries' / Allegations Under Investigation on the Commissioner's website, Michelle Donelan's name appears to be listed twice - but not for separate alleged breaches).

Thank you very much for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth M Marsh

Intimidation of Parliamentary Candidates: Committee on Standards in Public Life Review

25th July 2017

Submission from Rachel Maclean, Parliamentary Candidate, and MP for Redditch County

1. What is the nature and degree of intimidation experienced by Parliamentary candidates, in particular at the 2017 General Election?

Prevalent on social media including Facebook and Twitter. The abuse goes far beyond a dialogue on policies and includes:

Abusive comments about my wider family, my place of residence, my previous history and career, a previous general election campaign I fought.

It includes lies and fake news being written about my behaviour at public events, and widely circulated on community websites (not just political websites)

It includes profane language, general abuse, false accusations.

It also included specifically in my case, insinuations that my party was to blame for the recent death of a local child.

It is hard to explain how it makes you feel. It is anonymous people that you've never met, true, but it has a genuinely detrimental effect on your mental health. You are constantly thinking about these people and the hatred and bile they are directing towards you. Almost everyone I know who goes into politics from any party is doing it because they care about their community and their country and they want to serve. Yet it makes you question constantly, "is it worth it"

2. Does the issue of the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates reflect a wider change in the relationship and discourse between public office holders and the public?

I witnessed similar levels when I stood for election in 2015, in an opposition stronghold.

3. Has the media or social media significantly changed the nature, scale, or effect of intimidation of Parliamentary candidates? If so, what measures would you suggest to help address these issues?

I noticed that the local (non social) media was very ready to believe the "fake news" prevalent on social media about me.

Social media has definitely made politics a very unpleasant arena. I believe that Facebook needs to do much, much more.

4. Is existing legislation sufficient to address intimidation of Parliamentary candidates?

No

5. What role should political parties play in preventing the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates and encouraging constructive debate?

They should all sign up to clean campaigning pledges and de-select any local candidate who carries out such behaviour or allows such behaviour to be carried out in his/her name.

6. What other measures might be effective in addressing the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates, and candidates for public offices more broadly?

Mainstream broadcasters such as the state funded BBC and channel 4 need to do more to shine a light on the fake news that is often at the root of the abuse. How it happens is that a fake news story gains traction on Facebook. Then we as parliamentary candidates are deluged with comments/accusations protesting that we allow such and such a disgraceful thing to happen. The whole thing spirals out of control very quickly. Meanwhile we know nothing about this. And it turns out that the whole campaign is based on something false, but by the time we get a statement from our hQ its much too late and everyone believes it! Its out there as a meme, and the activists are sharing and sharing leading to more and more abuse pouring in. These things go viral extremely quickly and what most people don't realise is that election candidates are all volunteers, trying to do a day job as well as campaign under extreme pressure, and don't have teams of people able to rebut everything from all channels continually.

7. Could the experience of intimidation by Parliamentary candidates discourage people from standing for elected or appointed public offices?

Without a doubt. I know of many good people who are put off because of what they see going on.

8. Has the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates led to a change in the way in which public office holders interact with the public in correspondence, on social media, or at in-person events?

It has for me. I am constantly having to think about what would happen if something was broadcast. I have only ever been a candidate in the age of social media however, so I know nothing different.

17th July 2017

Dear Lord Bew,

You have been asked to investigate the recent upsurge of abuse directed at MPs

I hope that as part of your enquiry you will consider the role that the BBC has played in creating an environment in which abusing MPS

is considered acceptable. In December of last year, in the week that the murderer of JO Cox MP was sentenced, the BBC thought it appropriate to call another MP an 'a [REDACTED] e' on Radio 4 at approximately 12.30 on a Saturday afternoon. When I complained to the BBC it responded that the MPs was, according to it, 'fair game' and in any case the BBC was 'only joking'. I did follow the complaints procedure as far as it would take me but to no avail. The BBC is adamant that it is the right to call MPs 'a [REDACTED] s' whenever it wishes, no matter how much MPs or their families or the general public object to it. Given the BBC's example it should come as little surprise that other individuals also behave in this way.

I would be happy to provide you with copies of the correspondence between myself and the BBC regarding this matter if you so wish.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Abbott

Carlo James Zambonini
16 July 2017 12:28

Re: THE RESPECT FOR THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Lord Bew, I totally concur with the condemnation of the personal abuse that MPs and others are receiving. The quotes of that received by Diane Abbott MP were particularly unacceptable, offensive and condemned.

However, there is a severe case of disaffection against the House of Commons and it is little wonder that some in their zeal to condemn are breaching acceptable limits of dissent. The House of Commons put the British people through the biggest schism in social cohesion since 1938, arguably through self-seeking cowardice.

I enclose a copy of what I sent to Mims Davies MP (Eastleigh) for reflection on the problem of our main legislature and its contents!

JAMES ZAMBONINI

THIS VERSION INCLUDES THE COALITION AND FIGURES! and HARROGATE!

James Zambonini, Romeo and Juliet Foundation,

I caught your piece to camera (Channel 4) on Wednesday(?). I'm sorry Mims, there is no justification for personal abuse, but the recent form for the House of Commons has been "asking for it". Since 2015, the output of the Commons has gone psychiatric, it has been on a downward spiral since 2010 and the banking crisis. This is not partisan, but the response to the Arab Spring by Government, unabated by the Commons has been unforgiveable-UN1973, Syria. The Commons traipsed into the lobby to vote for a referendum against membership of the EU. The European Union has its conceptual origins in Auschwitz and we voted it out in a shambolic and undemocratic plebiscite. What do you expect? Consider:-

1. A dog in the night-it barks ,it does not bite!
2. Its select committees are talking shops which don't initiate legislation (unlike Scotland)'
3. Its a totally reliable rubber-stamp for Whitehall.
4. Its government benches actually represent 20.8% "of the people". The representation is not fit for purpose regarding constituency size, voting system and so on. I won't bore you with PR-you know the arguments.
5. It thinks its pluralistic however, although there is ethnic and gender balance (not yet complete!), there are imbalances in class and education. The problem is class. Most MPs are economists and lawyers-try finding a physicist! Most MPs are bourgeois! And how!
6. It may be in the wrong place .A better place may be Harrogate! A better way of spending £4.2 billion may be in Harrogate (North Yorkshire).Rather than the corroding Augustus Pugin's Lunatic Asylum for the Treatment of the Syphilitic, spend money in popular northern Harrogate. Harrogate is the centre of gravity(C of G) of the United Kingdom! see Chris Bryant MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS HAS HUMAN AND SYSTEM ERRORS:-
HUMAN

- CULTURAL DISCONNECT
- GROUP THINK
- INTELLECTUAL PREJUDICE
- CONVENIENT PRAGMATISM
- OPERATIONAL DISCONNECT
- PREOCCUPATION WITH MEDIA
- CHATEAU GENERALSHIP

SYSTEM

- P.M. Weak at Centre-Monitoring, scrutiny by Commons
- MUSICAL CHAIRS (e.g. ED.SEC lasts 2 Years)
- ACTIVIST MINISTERS-need Commons scrutiny.
- LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY
- PERIPHERAL PARLIAMENT-Executive side-steps.
- ASSYMETRY OF EXPERTISE(Grenfell?)
- NO DELIBERATION. Expediency first!

COST OF BLUNDERS BY HMG AND COMMONS=£164.13 billion(1980-2010)

COST OF BLUNDERS BY EU IN UK =ZERO (1980-2010)

Currently calculating with NAO for Coalition=£60-80 billion. est. (2010-2017)

FROM DANTE'S REFERENDUM:-

NICK AND DAVE'S CALAMITIES

1. Macroeconomic policy. Austerity deemed too severe.
2. Lansley's Health Reforms-Clever men are not always sensible.
3. West Coast Mainline Franchise. Bizarre.
4. Bonfire of Quangos. Did it happen?
5. Police commissioners. Derisory turnout.
6. AV Referendum 2011. Badly managed c.f. Harold Wilson in 1975.Put back Fair Votes, years/decades.
7. Tuition Fees. Nuff' said.
8. Immigration Target, 100,000 by 2015. Unbelievable.
9. "Patsy" Tax. "Caravan" Tax. Jokes.
10. A4e- Outsourcing
11. ATOS Healthcare.
12. Gay Marriage. Liberal reform but antagonised the churches!
13. Abu Quatada-Theresa May's nemesis!
14. Forestry Commission-privatisation row C. Spelman.
15. ENG Bacc Cerebral reform from M.. Gove. Schools not set up, as in S.E. Asia.
16. Universal Credit .Pass- IDS! Constantly threatened to be introduced!
17. Spare room/Bedroom Tax. Hated.
18. EU Referendum-Cameron's Baby proposed for manifesto Jan.23rd 2013.
19. G4s at 2012 London Olympics. Possible New labour inheritance.
20. LIBYA 2011, U.N. 1973/SYRIA 2011-16, "Partnered" with France. Military/Foreign Policy Disasters, see Outcomes.

21. 2015 Terrorist Threat Level Raised and still raised in 2017.

REF: THE BLUNDERS OF OUR GOVERNMENTS, Prof. Anthony King, and Ivor Crewe.

Always a pleasure to help the understanding for the member for Eastleigh!

YOURS

JAMES ZAMBONINI

ROMEO AND JULIET FOUNDATION.

John brooks

Subject: abuse of members of Parliament.

Dear Lord Bew,

Agree with your sentiments concerning abuse of MP's and also members of the public who are abused because of differing viewpoints, it seems that many of the younger generation in particular are unable to listen and converse in a reasonable manner they want everything and want it now without considering an alternative view.

However wrong they are MP's and the House of Lords need to ask themselves a few questions about the way the country is governed - a Parliamentary Democracy is not a true Democracy, to highlight this fact when the recent referendum on the 'EU' was held the vast majority of MP's voted remain, whilst the people voted Leave, which proves MP's were out of touch with their constituents. MP's and the Lords assume they know best even when they know the public think differently.

A few examples;

- 1, Capital punishment, the majority of the public want, child murderers and terrorist hanged, (personally I am against hanging but I along with Parliament are the minority.)
2. We voted for a Common (trading) Market not the 'EU' but we were ambushed into it by stealth by Ted Heath and other Politicians.
3. The majority of the public want the House of Lords disbanded/closed or perhaps replaced with an elected chamber, for example a non political representative from each county/proportional representation. its current existence cannot be justified.

It may well be that a Swiss Government type referendum based system (reckoned to be the fairest in the world) where the public vote on the polices and MP's simply administer what the public instruct them to do, may be a ideal for the UK?.

Of course we must all condem abuse of MP's/Unelected Lords or anyone else, but you all have a duty to ensure the taxpayers instructions are adhered to, as with Brexit it must be expedited soonest so all those who may be affected know how to proceed, my old company for example has made three differing plans for Brexit already - they are simply waiting for Parliament to get into gear and act.

Kind regards
john brooks

Review of Intimidation of Parliamentary Candidates
Committee on Standards in Public Life

26th July 2017

Review of Intimidation of Parliamentary Candidates

Dear Sir,

I am pleased to attach my perspective, as a member of the public, regarding this Review of Intimidation of Parliamentary Candidates. As a citizen it seems worthwhile to give my views concerning this important subject.

I recognise the important role of legitimate scrutiny of those standing for public office by the public and the press. However, the existing situation is not ideal, and would benefit from improvement.

Theme 1. What is the nature and degree of intimidation experienced by Parliamentary candidates, in particular at the 2017 General Election?

1. Of relevance is the recent example of how the Democratic Unionist Party has been treated once it became possible that the DUP might be aligned with the Conservative Party within Government. If I had been on the receiving end of some of the statements that the DUP have had to put up with I could have regarded this as threatening.

Theme 2. Does the issue of the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates reflect a wider change in the relationship and discourse between public office holders and the public?

2. Yes, in my view the climate of opinion has changed. It seems to me that UK society is less tolerant today than it was in the past, (compared to say 10 years, or maybe even 5 years ago). Certain groups express their views and the media applauds. While other equally valid opinions are frowned upon.

3. I urge that the UK does not have any more referendums for a while. Recent referendums seem to have been divisive (EU and Scottish). In the context of a referendum some individuals can get very heated, and struggle to accept that there can be legitimate opinions that are different from their own.

Theme 3. Has the media or social media significantly changed the nature, scale, or effect of intimidation of Parliamentary candidates? If so, what measures would you suggest to help address these issues?

4. *The media* - I consider that the media has (inadvertently) increased the likelihood of intimidation. The media often seem to give people holding certain views a disproportionately hard time. This could encourage members of the public to do the same. It would be helpful if the media could be reformed. This would not be easy to achieve. However as a first step it seems appropriate that staff employed in the media are broadly representative of UK society as a whole.

5. A good place to start could be the BBC. I understand that a Freedom of Information request has provided data about employment at the BBC of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual people. Apparently, the data indicates that 11.5% of BBC bosses and 10.6% of BBC staff are LGBT. As context, the latest Office for National Statistics data gives 1.7% of the UK population as lesbian, gay or bisexual. (Also, the number of people who have obtained a gender recognition certificate to change their legal birth sex is around 0.007% of the UK population.) It seems right that the BBC output should aim to reflect the overall makeup of the UK population. This ought to be easier to achieve if BBC staff numbers reflect the makeup of the UK population. It would therefore be helpful if BBC had staff numbers that broadly reflected the UK population as a whole.

6. *Social media* – I have heard it said that there can be a tendency for strong users of social media to be in their own “bubble” and so are only exposed to the views of people like them. The effect of this could be intolerance of people with views different to their own, when on occasions speaking to people face-to-face. However, social media is here to stay, and it is hard to see what can be done to regulate that media. The increasing use of social media has affected matters considered in this theme, but it is easy to blame social media for trends in society that are happening anyway.

Theme 4. Is existing legislation sufficient to address intimidation of Parliamentary candidates?

7. *No comment.*

Theme 5. What role should political parties play in preventing the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates and encouraging constructive debate?

8. *Political parties could run educational programmes for their activists, to try and encourage constructive debate. This could be especially appropriate just after individuals have joined a political party. Also, such programmes could be periodically repeated.*

Theme 6. What other measures might be effective in addressing the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates, and candidates for public offices more broadly?

9. *In my view, the measures taken to address intimidation of Parliamentary candidates should be basically the same measures taken to address intimidation of public offices more broadly. However, across the board, the situation could be improved if there was an increase in community engagement between office holders and the public. Such greater involvement could allow the public to appreciate the difficulties that public office holders have to grapple with. Hopefully, this could help diffuse the “them and us” attitude that can exist in some quarters.*

Theme 7. Could the experience of intimidation by Parliamentary candidates discourage people from standing for elected or appointed public offices?

10. Yes, unfortunately this could be likely.

Theme 8. Has the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates led to a change in the way in which public office holders interact with the public in correspondence, on social media, or at in-person events?

11. I do not have evidence about this. However, I assume that public office holders were already somewhat circumspect when communicating with the public. It would be unsurprising if public office holders are now even more circumspect than was the case previously.

Yours faithfully

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Submission to the CSPL : Intimidation of Parliamentary Candidates Review

From Professor D P Gregg (retired). I am an academic with fifty years experience in business systems and policy analysis and mathematical modelling. I led research and consultancy teams in academia and a large multinational company, advising on strategy. For many years I have researched the formulation and impact of, for example, government justice and welfare policy and particularly that concerning the disabled and chronically ill. This has led me to disturbing conclusions about the frequent failure of politicians and civil servants to publically conform to the Nolan Principles. I suggest this has great relevance to your current review.

1. Intimidation and abuse of any individual is unacceptable under any circumstances. It becomes worse when aimed at an individual because of membership of an identifiable sub-group. Whatever the corporate sins of the group the individual may be innocent. But any abuse 'wildfire' needs fuel and oxygen. Assuming we cannot and should not, remove the oxygen of publicity in the case of public-politician discourse, perhaps we should concentrate on removing the fuel source? I submit that if the inmates of Westminster and Whitehall were more virtuous the fire would go out or at least be more easily controlled. So herein, I would like to address two of your review themes:
 2. Does the intimidation of PCs reflect a *wider change* in the relationship and discourse between public office holders and the public?
 6. What other measures might be effective in addressing the intimidation of PCs, and candidates for public offices *more broadly*?
2. On theme 2, I submit that the behaviour of politicians (and their servants) over the last few decades, thanks to the evolving communications media, has become both more questionable and more open to (superficial) public scrutiny. I suggest as prime examples The MP Expenses Scandal, cash for influence, the misrepresentation of the facts and arguments for and against Brexit and the poor political response to the Grenfell Tower disaster. Although the majority of the public do not analyse such issues in great detail, nevertheless, over time, a perception has formed, almost by group osmosis, that politicians are dishonest, devious, self-serving, incompetent and hypocritical. Those of us who analyse government policy in forensic detail can easily point to many examples which confirm that the Nolan Principles are frequently breached: particularly on objectivity, honesty, integrity, accountability and leadership. Such specialist analyses are regularly reviewed in the 'quality' press and their clear messages about the misconduct of politicians diffuse into the wider media...even to the normally supine BBC. The general public will 'get' the correct message eventually and politicians are foolish to ignore this process. If you doubt this consider the emergence of the black reputation of Tony Blair: from hero to despised zero in a decade.
3. So, on your theme 6, the ultimate, most 'effective measure' to greatly reduce the intimidation of PCs et al is to raise the reputation of the political class by raising the standard of conduct in public life and *enforcing compliance* with the Nolan Principles. The role of the CSPL and of Parliamentary watchdog committees should be central to this aim. Sadly my experience is that such cross party watchdogs either have no teeth or suffer from conflicts of interest, being deeply embedded in the Westminster-Whitehall system. Since all parties in government routinely sin against the Nolan Principles, an unwritten non-aggression pact

seems to operate, limiting the severity of criticism of given government policies and actions by such watchdogs. Below I will use the Public Accounts Committee as an example.

4. To explain my case I take the policy, implementation record and official evaluations of the Troubled Family Programme which has direct, state intervention antecedents going back to the mid 1990s. That is, the policy has been strongly supported by New Labour, the Coalition, the Conservatives and current Labour despite objective evidence of repeated failure (1). Cross party support for the 'undeserving poor' myth has led to tragic consequences for many vulnerable people as I will show. The Troubled Families Programme cost at least £450 million between 2012 and 2015. TFP phase 2 is costing us ~£900 million between 2015 and 2020. The TFP became the flagship response to the Summer Riots of 2011. David Cameron blamed the riots on a gang culture flourishing because of anti-social, dysfunctional 'troubled families' in the underclass. Cameron told the media in 2012:

'They are the source of a large proportion of the problems in society...[these are] people with a twisted moral code. Irresponsibility. Selfishness. Behaving as if your choices had no consequences. Children without fathers. Reward without effort. Rights without responsibilities. Communities without control. **Drug addiction. Alcohol abuse. Crime.** A culture of irresponsibility and disruption that cascades through the generations.'

5. The supposed behaviour of the TFP families was used to justify the wider attack on welfare benefits including introducing the bedroom tax, limiting child tax credits, imposing a total benefit cap, and tightening the assessment criteria for disability and chronic illness benefits. In fact the independent Riots Panel having surveyed 80 LAs in riot areas found only a 5% overlap between rioters and families targeted for the TFP. This was confirmed in the official Ecorys 2014 report on the characteristics of the TFs (2). The TFs were actually targeted because of their high support cost to the state. Cameron and DCLG minister, Eric Pickles, told the media ad nauseam that the 120,000 'worst' families cost us £9 billion in 2011. The costs were said to relate to crime, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse and worklessness, or in short hand, bad behaviour, bad 'lifestyle choices' and laziness. However the government sponsored National Evaluation of the TFP 2016 (6) showed us that ~90% of the families were not involved in crime or ASB; 97% of families were not receiving formal drug addiction treatment; 88% were not alcohol dependent. False, (ideological) a priori assumptions about the families led directly to the £9 billion cost claims (3). The cost of crime was deliberately exaggerated by a factor of 6.5 X. The author has shown that objective government data available in 2011 leads to a cost estimate of ~£2.5 billion and this was confirmed by an official analysis of 67 actual LA costs published belatedly in 2016 (4).

6. More importantly the author showed that only a small fraction of this cost *could be attributed* to bad behaviour and lifestyle choices; perhaps £0.5 billion. This represented the maximum potential saving *assuming* that TFP style interventions would be effective. The final (quietly) claimed savings were ~£430 million (but see below) compared with the DCLG / Pickles claim of £1.2 billion in 2015 when 99% of families were supposedly 'turned around' successfully. If over 90% of the original family costs still remain this is clearly a false claim. In fact 132 of 152 LAs claimed 100% turn around and received a full 'bounty' on that basis. These totally false claims were achieved by relaxing the already weak 'payment by results' criteria and by including families processed under other schemes (4). In essence (dubious) success in *one of several criteria* was presented (and rewarded) as a complete 'turn around'. The 99% turn around claim was a complete fantasy or, as we should say, a deliberate lie.

Nevertheless in the PAC TFP Inquiry in 2016, Dame Louse Casey, the TF Tsar, defended the 99% claim and described the TFP as (5)

'value for money writ large, chairman.'

7. The objective evidence commissioned by the DCLG itself using 'control groups' shows the TFP to be a costly, abusive fiasco having **zero impact** and hence zero savings. It *cannot* deliver because it begins from the false, ideological position that our families are responsible for their own troubles via bad behaviour and irresponsible lifestyle choices and therefore are undeserving of state support and public sympathy. As Pickles told the media repeatedly:

"We have sometimes run away from categorising, stigmatising, laying blame...It's time to realise the state is no longer willing to subsidise a life of complete non-fulfilment on just about every level.'

8. Yet it was clear since the first government sponsored Family Intervention Project evaluation in 1999 that the majority of families targeted for 'assertive' and harsh 'sanctions based' interventions had high levels of mental and physical illness and disability. They were socially inadequate, largely unemployable and living in extreme poverty. The Ecorys 2014 report on the families and the National Evaluation 2016 (7) told us that:

75% of the families had at least one member with a limiting, long standing illness or disability.

52% had at least one child with an SEN statement or other special needs.

57% were subsisting on disability benefits.

45% had at least one adult with a mental illness.

40% of all families were sanctioned or threatened with sanctions during the TFP.

9. I suggest that the Cameron-Pickles extreme misrepresentation of these vulnerable families was shameful. They lied to the public. As a result of the above conditions, most of the family support cost related to health and poverty issues, not bad behaviour. To eliminate these costs it would be necessary to remove the families i.e. via sterilisation and euthanasia. Two independent analyses in the National Evaluation showed that the families received little help with their serious health problems and that the TFP led to no improvement in family health, wellbeing and stability.

10. At the PAC Inquiry in 2016 (8) only senior officers of the DCLG were called to give evidence and they made strenuous efforts to undermine the official evaluation conclusions that the TFP had **no** impact on any of the issues targeted including crime, ABS, education, welfare dependency and health. While the PAC was critical it concluded, contrary to all the objective evidence available, that 'improved monitoring' of TFP phase 2 would 'find' the missing evidence of impacts and savings. It was allowed to proceed. Either the PAC failed to understand the objective evidence of the National Evaluation or programme cancellation was too embarrassing. Both major parties had endorsed the TFP / FIP model for nearly two decades, contrary to masses of evidence covering, e.g. ~60 earlier FIPs.

11. The TFP policy, implementation and evaluations illustrate major failures, from the Prime Minister downwards, in the DCLG and in the PAC, in conforming with the Nolan Principles of honesty (misrepresentation of facts and statistics), integrity (favouring political self-interest), objectivity (rejecting objective, scientifically proven evidence), accountability (dodging and obscuring inconvenient truths), leadership (failure to challenge blatantly poor behaviour re the Nolan Principles). If the committee believes that the TFP and the wider denigration of the disabled and chronically sick was an unintended accident, please consider this 2016 conclusion on the UK government from the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (9):

'... the threshold of *grave or systematic violations* of the rights of persons with disabilities has been met. Persons with disabilities have been regularly portrayed negatively as...making a living out of benefits, committing fraud as benefit claimants, being lazy and putting a burden on tax payers...The committee also collected evidence about persons with disabilities whose mental health condition had severely deteriorated as a result of [the work capability assessment]... in many cases the implementation of welfare measures [bedroom tax, sanctions, refusal of ESA / PIP, etc] has reinforced the dependency of persons with disabilities on informal sources [food banks] and formal family care...'

12. Such conclusions shame Britain and our rabid politicians. I also submit that stigmatising minority groups for ideological reasons and political benefit as Cameron, Pickles and Casey did with the troubled families and the wider disabled/sick community, has broader negative consequences. Analyses suggest 500 to 1,000 suicides per annum among people sanctioned by the DWP or refused ESA or PIP status (6,10,11,12). Surely harsh rhetoric and abusive attitudes and policies, against sub-groups considered a nuisance by recent governments, give the signal to weaker minds among the general public that such behaviour is acceptable? It is OK to be abusive against those you despise for whatever reason: political, religious, ethnic, sexual orientation, etc... As you sow, so may you reap.

13. The author submits that the TFP case is not unusual and that diffusion of knowledge of such cases steadily *poisons the reputation of British politics and that of working, strongly 'party line' MPs, PCs and other public servants* (see ref. 13 for other examples and a perspective going back to the 1990s). But simply providing 'special protection' for MPs and PCs would stifle debate and legitimate criticism of misbehaviour in public office and cause deep public resentment, while not deterring the kind of mentally deranged individual who attacked Joe Cox MP. *Stressing and enforcing the Nolan Principles in public life would do more good as would loudly punishing misconduct in public office.* The boil should always be lanced. The allowed, quiet departure of bad apples (such as Pickles and Casey in the TFP fiasco) is not sufficient to restore the reputation of British politics. I would also add and *enforce* an eighth, and primary, Nolan Principle: **first, do no harm.**

Professor David Gregg : 

N.B. I enclose a copy of reference 1, upon which much of my analysis here is based, for the convenience of the committee.

References

1. 'The Great Troubled Families Fraud : state lies and failed policies.'; Introduction and section 4, David P Gregg, Green Man Books, 2017, ISBN 978 1543236118.
2. *ibid* : section 1.2: Family Selection and Characteristics: Myths & Reality.
3. *ibid* : section 1.3 The Fiscal Case for the TFP : Fake News.
4. *ibid* : section 1.6 The 2015 and 2016 Claimed TFP 'Cost Saving'.
5. *ibid* : section 1.7 The Public Accounts Committee Inquiries 2014 and 2016 : exercises in alternative facts'.
6. *ibid* : Appendix S1 : 'Benefit Sanctions : Death & the DWP'.
7. 'National Evaluation of the TFP phase 1', Department for Communities & Local Government, 2016. (A collection of 7 reports in 689 pages, on the DCLG website).
8. The PAC TFP Inquiry 2016 database: on the PAC website, listing all verbal and written evidence sources and content and a verbatim record of the inquiry meeting. See also ref. 5.
9. Benefits & Work news report ; 08.11.2016.
10. 'Benefit Sanctions', NAO HC 628, 30.11.16.
11. 'Death has become part of Britain's benefit system', The Guardian, 27.08.2015.
12. 'Suicides of benefit claimants reveal DWP flaws, says inquiry', The Guardian, 13.05.2016.
13. 'The ASBO Gestapo : human rights decay ; state disability abuse' , David P Gregg, Green Man Books, 2014, ISBN 978 1502517982.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA



Chloe Smith MP
Working Hard for Norwich North

Lord Bew
Review of Intimidation of Parliamentary Candidates
Committee on Standards in Public Life

Dear Lord Bew,

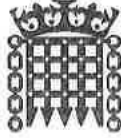
Re: Review of the issue of intimidation experienced by Parliamentary candidates, and the broader implications of this for other holders of public office

I enclose two letters which I have recently had cause to write. I hope you will consider these as part of the review you are conducting, which I also strongly believe encompasses intimidation that can affect the general public.

Sadly the incidents described within are not at all isolated in my eight years' experience as a Member of Parliament, and clearly are not limited to election time. I already refer within to repeated abuse at Norwich Pride, and broadly the same group of left wing political activists carry out similar activity quite regularly. I have also previously informed the Deputy Speaker of the Commons of a 2015 incident in which I was physically chased through a dark, underground car park in Norwich, being harangued and filmed, by individuals connected to the 'Norfolk People's Assembly' and 'Class War'.

Yours etc,

Chloe Smith
Member of Parliament for Norwich North



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA



Chloe Smith MP
Working Hard for Norwich North

Superintendent [REDACTED]
Norfolk Constabulary
Bethel St Police Station

31 July 2017

Re: Reporting of an offence

At the Norwich Pride 2017 event on 29th July, a person that I believe to be [REDACTED] committed what I understand may be a public order offence against me. As I passed him in the street in front of Norwich City Hall, he loudly, publicly and specifically called me by name and shouted "you little Nazi" at me. This occurred at around 12.30pm and in front of a crowd.

As he had a banner displayed to echo his sentiments, he clearly intended his actions. I found the incident threatening, abusive and extremely insulting. Considering the public context, I imagine he set out to cause harassment, alarm or distress. I understand these points to be relevant to section 4A of the Public Order Act 1986.

Through this letter I am formally reporting this as an incident. I can also confirm that I perceived this incident to have been motivated by prejudice or hate. For information, I also enclose a letter which I have today sent to the chair of Norwich Pride as this sets out a broader context of an atmosphere on this day of prejudice and hate.

Sadly, this is only the most prominent of a number of public-order type incidents I have experienced in my eight years of public service and so I am copying this letter to the chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, so that he can take the incident into account in his review of the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates and the public.

I would be grateful for your advice on next steps.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Chloe Smith
Member of Parliament for Norwich North



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA



Chloe Smith MP
Working Hard for Norwich North

The Chairperson
Norwich Pride

31 July 2017

Dear Chairperson,

Re: Norwich Pride 2017

I attended Norwich Pride 2017, as I have consistently as a city MP, to represent and support my constituents. As you acknowledge on the Norwich Pride website¹, I have “always unreservedly supported Norwich Pride”. I have also proudly voted in Parliament for equal marriage and regularly assist LGBT+ constituents with a variety of casework.

While speaking from the steps of City Hall to help launch the parade, activists were permitted to sabotage my supportive words with political placards behind me and with considerable noise from organised elements in the crowd.

If your team of stewards did not know the activists who invaded the speaking area, this suggests a naïve, and at worst negligent, approach to the safety of your speakers and the crowd. If the activists were known to you, then sadly this suggests you collude in or condone such hostile behaviour.

Sadly, this is not the first time that activists at Norwich Pride have displayed crude, abusive and insulting behaviour. For instance, during the Question Time in 2012, I was heckled even while sharing the example that my father was being treated for cancer. Most of this behaviour is purely focused on my being a representative of the Conservative Party. Far from demonstrating tolerance, open-mindedness and respect for any individual and their choices, this behaviour shows intolerance, hate and prejudice. The subject matter is party-political and rarely specific to LGBT+ issues, suggesting that Pride, and its core values², are being hijacked.

This behaviour is bullying and abusive, intended to intimidate. It hurts many Pride attendees, who hold a range of political views, and it hurts the general public, of which 37,000 people in the two Norwich constituencies voted Conservative at the 2017

¹ <http://www.norwichpride.org.uk/2017/06/norwich-pride-press-release/>. Accessed 31 July 2017

² <http://www.norwichpride.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Pride-Core-Values-v2105.pdf> Accessed 31 July 2017

election, for example, and will be alienated by such displays. It hurts the reputation and effectiveness of Pride.

You describe Norwich Pride as a “celebration for everyone”, “to ensure that Norwich is a city where everyone can feel safe and proud to be themselves”³. You say: “We understand that our supporters come from a range of social and political backgrounds.”⁴ Whilst the words are powerful, the reality on the ground is sadly the opposite.

I hope you will take action to ensure that these important statements are upheld. I note that you already have the concept of taking action against “anyone who has publicly damaged Pride”⁵ and I have provided you with evidence in this letter of such damage – even if it weren’t there for all to see at the parade.

I expect that this letter provides you with an opportunity to respond in good faith. I am also informing the Committee on Standards in Public Life of my concerns, so that they can take them into account in their review of the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates and the public⁶. Additionally, I am informing the police of one particular incident of abuse at this year’s event.

I sincerely hope to be able to continue to support Norwich Pride, as I remain a committed ally of the movement and a passionate representative of all of my constituents.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Chloe Smith
Member of Parliament for Norwich North

³ <http://www.norwichpride.org.uk/>. Accessed 31 July 2017

⁴ <http://www.norwichpride.org.uk/2017/06/norwich-pride-press-release/>. Accessed 31 July 2017

⁵ <http://www.norwichpride.org.uk/about-us/about-norwich-pride/> Accessed 31 July 2017

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/intimidation-of-parliamentary-candidates-committee-announces-short-review> Accessed 31 July 2017



THE ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP AGAINST ANTISEMITISM

Submission to the Committee on Standards in Public Life Review of Intimidation of Parliamentary Candidates

Compiled by: John Mann MP and Danny Stone MBE

Summary

- **Abuse of parliamentary candidates is not a new phenomenon, but evidence would suggest that with the growth of social media, candidates are more exposed and open to abuse which is taking place on a larger scale than even five years ago.**
- **Abuse of social media to attack others is a significant, present and evolving threat, and whilst some positive, reactive work is taking place, consolidation of existing legislation, efforts to hold social media companies liable for failing to abide by their terms of service and improvements to penal enforcement are required. Industry bodies could also strengthen and improve reporting, tracking and blocking processes.**
- **The APPG stands by the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Electoral Conduct finding that electoral law has been “underused or misunderstood”. The Government should bring forward measures to implement the recommendations of the Law Commission review of electoral law without delay.**
- **Political parties have not done enough to prepare candidates for election. Improvements recommended in 2013 have not been implemented and better training, guidance, support and disciplinary measures should be introduced.**

1. Background: The All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Electoral Conduct and Updates

1.1 In October 2013, a cross-party parliamentary panel published the findings of its inquiry into electoral conduct with a particular focus on racism and discrimination in campaigning. The report, inspired by the recommendations of an earlier all-party inquiry into antisemitism, drew upon a significant evidential base, including submissions from nearly every political party represented in parliament. Its aims were to assess existing rules, uncover models of good practice and propose recommendations for change. Underpinning the report was a commitment to the fundamental importance of freedom of speech. The report’s publication marked the first time that such matters had been analysed in a systemic way by parliamentarians. A total of 30 recommendations were directed at government, regulatory authorities, the police and others. The report was widely welcomed by the Government and all parties. Following the 2015 General Election, the Chair of the inquiry, former House of Commons Deputy Speaker Natascha Engel, commissioned a review to determine the impact of the report, and identify any unresolved issues requiring further action. A second review was published in 2017. The all-party report and subsequent updates include many relevant details which the Committee on Standards in Public Life will want to consider, but we have drawn on the most pertinent recommendations to answer the questions set by the Committee in the following section.

2. Answers to the Committee's Questions

What is the nature and degree of intimidation experienced by Parliamentary candidates, in particular at the 2017 General Election?

2.1 Pages 19-28 of the 2017 update to the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Electoral Conduct, pages 6-10 of the 2015 update to the same report, and chapters one, two and other sections of the all-party parliamentary inquiry itself provide explicit details of egregious examples of racist and other abuse experienced by Parliamentary candidates over many years. Whilst the report focuses on racism and discrimination, there are of course other examples of abuse that were not relevant but nonetheless serious, and the list of incidents, whilst detailed, is not exhaustive. It should be noted that the report focusses equally on discriminatory behaviour by candidates, as well as towards them.

Does the issue of the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates reflect a wider change in the relationship and discourse between public office holders and the public?

2.2 The notable difference over time in the nature of incidents covered by the all-party report, and the updates to it, has been the shift towards online abuse. Candidates are more accessible and public representatives arguably held in lower regard than ever before. Whereas incidents reported in 2013 tended to relate to physical attacks, leaflets and so on, many of the cases of discrimination uncovered in recent years tend to relate to social media. Where these relate to the behaviour of a candidate, it tends to be by way of scrutinising social media history.

Has the media or social media significantly changed the nature, scale, or effect of intimidation of Parliamentary candidates? If so, what measures would you suggest helping address these issues?

2.3 Abuse of social media to attack others poses a significant, present and evolving challenge not just for parliamentary candidates, but for civil society. The APPG Against Antisemitism has been considering, and acting on, this matter for over a decade. Taking antisemitism as just one example, statistics from the Community Security Trust show that in 2011, only 12 of 609 recorded antisemitic incidents were from social media. By 2016 this number had risen to 287 incidents, comprising 22 per cent of the overall total of 1,309. This number falls far short of the total number of antisemitic tweets, pictures, posts and messages that exist, or are accessible, across the various social media platforms.

2.4 The submission this APPG provided to the Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry into Hate Crime and its Violent Consequences sets out in detail the action taken to date. To summarise the recent key actions: the Crown Prosecution Service has reviewed its social media guidance; the Government has addressed these matters in its 2016 Hate Crime Action Plan from which a number of actions are planned; and across Europe, work to have social media companies remove illegal hate speech from their platforms within 24 hours, on a voluntary basis, is proving somewhat successful.

2.5 As regards possible measures to address internet abuse, the industry is keen to promote counter-speech, and occasionally restorative justice, as central planks of its response to hate speech. Money has been directed to research, for example with Demos, on collecting empirical evidence about what works in counter-narrative exercises. Facebook has developed 'in-line' reporting which pre-drafts messages for users to send to those who share questionable content. In addition, the development and improvement of reporting processes, the use of artificial intelligence, whitelisting expert

organisations, and efforts to impede internet trolls, are also important. This work should be encouraged, but alone is not enough.

2.6 In law, fortunately, Britain has a good national record in regard to convictions for internet related incitement, malicious communications and other online abuse. In *R v Sheppard and Whittle*, two men appealed against convictions for possessing, publishing and distributing racially inflammatory material contrary to the Public Order Act 1986. They had between them composed, edited and uploaded racist material online to a website hosted by a server in the USA. The judge ruled that the UK courts had jurisdiction to try the case as a substantial measure of their activities had taken place in the UK. This sets a very important precedent for prosecutions of online hate, but is not sufficiently well known or publicised. The prosecution of individuals who sent antisemitic twitter communications to Luciana Berger MP and others also set important precedents. However, as John Mann MP has previously advised the Home Affairs Select Committee, consideration of consolidating legislation in the UK, and adding a requirement for social media companies to keep their own terms of service, might be advisable.

2.7 Laws exist to protect the victims of online crime. Section 1 of the Malicious Communications Act 1988, Sections 4A and 5 of the Public Order Act 1986, Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003, and Sections 2 and 4 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, amongst others, all contain relevant clauses for taking action against crimes online and generally predate the widespread existence of social media. None of the offences covered by the aforementioned Acts include a specific defence for an Internet company that hosts material covered by one of these offences. A company might therefore theoretically find itself liable to criminal prosecution for encouraging or assisting one of these offences. In 2014, the House of Lords Communications Committee published a report into social media and criminal law. In reference to corporate liability for undesirable content, the Committee referenced Directive 2000/31/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2000, harmonised into UK law by the Electronic Commerce (EC Directive) Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/2013). The Lords Committee explained that:

2.8 “Those regulations give immunity to websites from damages or criminal sanctions where they act merely as a conduit, cache or host, so long as they operate an expeditious “take down on notice” service. This acts as an incentive to website operators to remove illegal or actionable material. It is for the website itself to determine whether the material which they have been asked to remove is genuinely illegal or actionable”.

2.9 The Lords Committee viewed that “Parliament has thus accepted the view that the liability of website operators should be limited in respect of content they host but which they have not originated”. The Lords continued: “Website operators are not necessarily [emphasis added] accessories in liability to crimes. The law could be changed to clarify this.” The Committee suggested an alternative approach might be the establishment of an ombudsman funded by website operators, to set policy and consider complaints. Subsequently, and most recently, the Home Affairs Select Committee recommended sanctions for companies failing to remove illegal content on request.

2.10 The Australians have opted for the former system and have established a two-tier scheme focussed on the removal of cyberbullying material from social media services. Based on an Act of parliament, companies are required to have a complaints management system, terms of use prohibiting cyberbullying and referral to a relevant ombudsman for complaints deemed inadequately addressed. Tier 1 is voluntary, but Tier 2 is mandatory with legally binding notices and penalties.

2.11 Further immunity from prosecution was conferred on social media providers through the Defamation Act 2013, which reformed defamation law in relation to the right to freedom of expression. Section 5 of the Act includes defences for ‘Operators of websites’. A website operator has a defence to charges by showing it was not they who ‘posted’ a statement on a website. The

defence can be defeated if three conditions are met, including the operator failing to respond to a notice in accordance with any provisions contained in regulations. Where a successful defamation action has been taken, the courts now have the ability to order the platform to remove the material.

2.12 Section 103 of the Digital Economy Act 2017 includes provision for a Code of Practice for providers of online social media platforms. This Code is broader than the Australian licensing system, further including guidance on conduct which involves “bullying or insulting the individual or behaviour likely to intimidate or humiliate the individual”.

2.13 The law provides frameworks for combating hate online which could be improved, but industry feedback is that action by judges still does not go far enough, in practical terms, to deal with the peddlers of cyber hate. The All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism of 2015 recommended “...that the Crown Prosecution Service undertakes a review to examine the applicability of prevention orders to hate crime offences and if appropriate, take steps to implement them”, and that “...the government offers additional resources to the police to enhance and develop policing and investigation of online hate crime.” Judges should be issuing sentences where relevant, that incorporate orders to ban individuals from holding multiple electronic devices, require the forfeiture of passwords, retain internet browsing history, delete the offending social media accounts, etc. More effective direction from judges and application of relevant judicial orders, including Banning and Criminal Behaviour Orders, would be welcome.

2.14 At present, the police lack sufficient expertise—or resources—in dealing with hate speech and hate crime on the internet. Whilst priority for funding must be determined by the forces themselves, having a single point of contact for the police and the Crown Prosecution Service with social media companies is essential. This exists in theory, but not always in practice. The police need increased digital capacity, better training specifically on criminal thresholds, better tools, and partnerships with relevant expert organisations. If successful, the MPS online hate crime hub is one potential model. Internet companies meanwhile must find better working relationships with police and more appropriate modes of action where their terms of service have already been contravened.

2.15 For the industry, as noted, further investment in artificial intelligence systems should be a priority. Algorithms must be created that more readily filter abusive words, accounts and pictures, and more effectively identify problem users and remove them. In the meantime, dual-factor blocking which seeks out and blocks accounts and tweets which have repeated and multiple use of pejorative words, perhaps as supplied by the Internet Watch Foundation, would be a good starting point. Social media acts as much as a search engine as a communication tool, and what is left on display can be found by children and others. The implications are significant and there is a requirement for greater consistency of approach and better training of moderators. Reporting and tracking is also far too cumbersome a process for those reporting abuse.

Is existing legislation sufficient to address intimidation of Parliamentary candidates?

2.16 The All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Electoral Conduct considered Electoral Law as part of its deliberations. The panel found that whilst there was sufficient legal provision to address incidents of racism and discrimination in UK elections, the law had been “underused or misunderstood”. Four recommendations were made with a view to improving the clarity and utility of legal provision. The relevant recommendations included that the Law Commission consider the definition and scope of the law relating to ‘undue influence’, and that the requirement for an imprint for non-party campaigners and others be extended to incorporate online and other election communications. Specifically, panellists were concerned that non-party groups could be used to create an electoral

advantage by rival candidates in an election. There is, however, wider application and concern about 'undue influence' laws that could seep into the debate about intimidation of Parliamentary candidates.

2.17 The Law Commission completed its review of electoral law and recommended that electoral offences should generally be redrafted in a simpler, more modern way. It believed that doing so would secure greater compliance by campaigners and the public, greater understanding by the police, and increased viability of prosecutorial action, which would promote enforcement. In regards to the specific offence of undue influence, the Law Commission's interim report recommends that significant changes should be made, making the offence more readily understood and enforced.

2.18 The Law Commission has also made a recommendation relating to online material imprints. Recommendation 11-6 of their interim report states that "the imprint requirement should extend to online campaign material which may reasonably be regarded as intending to procure or promote any particular result, subject to a reasonable practicability defence."

2.19 The Law Commission published its interim report in February 2017 and the Government is reviewing the recommendations it made. The Rt Hon Sir Eric Pickles has published his own report on electoral integrity which endorses several of the Law Commission recommendations. The Government should bring forward measures to implement the recommendations of the Law Commission without delay.

What role should political parties play in preventing the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates and encouraging constructive debate?

What other measures might be effective in addressing the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates, and candidates for public offices more broadly?

Could the experience of intimidation by Parliamentary candidates discourage people from standing for elected or appointed public offices?

Has the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates led to a change in the way in which public office holders interact with the public in correspondence, on social media, or at in-person events?

2.20 The All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Electoral Conduct made a number of recommendations to political parties about their processes and procedures. These included that the parties ensure no disability barriers in their selection processes, provide guidance for engaging with third party groups, improve training on racism and discrimination, remind candidates of their duties to use responsible language as part of pre-election correspondence, and specifically that "more could and should be done by political parties to prepare candidates for the ruthless nature of campaigning. This might include personal safety sessions and briefings from experienced campaigners." The committee also noted that "We were deeply concerned to learn that there are insufficient welfare support networks for candidates and that this is compounded by a culture of silence. We recommend that all parties urgently compile a register of contacts with associated referral procedures to appropriate support schemes for candidates. These might include help lines, counselling and other professional or voluntary services. In publishing these lists, the parties may lay the foundations to countering the culture of silence that exists. However, a shift in that culture will require former candidates to speak out and we encourage them to do so."

2.21 The political parties, with one exception, have failed to act or to meet this group's effort to constructively engage with them following the all-party inquiry. Leadership is required from the very top of the political parties to address this. Each party must step up to mark, and deal with their own problems, including abuse of and by candidates. Greater consistency of approach, in calling out abuse and leading efforts to change party cultures and structures is needed.

2.22 We understand that all candidates receive a feedback form about their experiences of fighting the election, on a cross-party basis. This, at present, omits antisemitism as one of the incidences of discrimination a candidate has encountered. This should be rectified. It is not possible to obtain a full picture of electoral abuse without appropriate frameworks for data capture and analysis.

2.23 The all-party report made a number of recommendations relating to unacceptable behaviour by candidates from across the political parties. Very few of the recommendations were implemented in this area. If the parties are to protect their candidates and seek to improve discourse and conduct during elections, they must start at home. We strongly recommend the CPSL make recommendations to the parties, perhaps rooted in those of the all-party inquiry report, about how they can improve reporting, discipline and training for their candidates so that they are above reproach when it comes to electoral intimidation and abuse.

3. About Us:

3.1 The APPG against Antisemitism was established to combat antisemitism and help develop and seek implementation of effective public policy to combat antisemitism. Secretariat services for the group are provided by the Antisemitism Policy Trust. Details of the group are available from <http://www.antisemitism.org.uk/the-appg>

Encl:

All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Electoral Conduct

All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Electoral Conduct: 2015 General Election Update

All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Electoral Conduct: Final Update

Lisa Robillard Webb

Hello [REDACTED]

I found my journey to the committee last week very worthwhile, thank you so much for the invitation.

I have reflected on the meeting and would like to re-emphasise a few points, ready for your report later in the year:

I think there could be a danger of focusing primarily on MPs and disregarding the difficulties that councillors and candidates face at all levels. There would be great benefit if the report could bear this in mind.

It strikes me that with abuse via social media, the victim themselves has to collate all the evidence and try to get the comments taken down or as a final resort shut down the offending account. This can be difficult if the abuse is of a paralysing nature, I feel that each political party should have the in-house capability to support people facing this type of abuse.

I feel that parties have a duty of care to their volunteers. Other organisations and employers already have this duty of care.

As a starter, it would be beneficial to have a simple and quick way to forward the abuse to; where it could be analysed by experts who could decide the next steps. Currently my party has a formal legal team, they are dealing the social media complaints as if they are a full blown legal complaint. I feel a social media specialist would be more expedient at handling these matters.

For parties to imply that they don't have the resources to fund one officer or some social media specialists, feels like a denial of how society is moving. And more importantly to me, by not dealing with this abuse, the abuse continues almost with the complicit permission of the party.

I'm sure there is more to say, but these are the key points that has concerned me over the last two years.

Good luck with the report and once more thank you for including me.

Kind regards, Lisa

Sean Dromgoole

Labour Candidate for Somerton and Frome

Summary: First time candidate in 2017 in a largely Tory shire with one large town (Frome)

I experienced very low levels of intimidation during the campaign. Much lower than I was anticipating. In Somerset a red rosette can and does attract a few idiots who think it's funny to scream "Britain First" at Labour candidates but they are not doing it from a recognised position but rather an absence of grace.

In previous campaigns we have noted Tory packing of hustings with "growlers" in the front few rows. They were notable by their absence in this campaign. Generally they, and their candidate, stayed at home. While at home, the Tory candidate and his followers noted considerable damage to their posters. I don't think this was organised (I know it wasn't us). I suspect a lone wolf. Some of it was quite witty and a lot of it was done with the same colour paint (black). One of the Tory supporters told me at the count that they had video of "a cyclist in black lycra" from one of the poster sites. This anti-capitalist ninja remains at large although moaning about him/her was enough to get the Tory candidate the headline, in the supportive local press, the week before the vote.

Social Media is a quagmire. Everyone is still learning how to use it. Any statement, by any candidate, in a public forum attracts wildly tangential responses, mainly from the school of rebuttal. Any further comment attracts a further deluge. Some of these responses are patronising, some angry, much of it utterly incomprehensible. In my experience there wasn't much that was personal. It was more about my positions, or those of my party. In my social media feeds there was more anger directed at my party leader than there was at me – but then I haven't been in power yet and so in a position to vote for things for which I can then be held accountable.

Personally I found video distributed through social media an effective tool for getting our message across. That this attracted swathes of ire, I just took as proof that it was reaching further than other means of communication.

Social media is a more responsive and tactile media than any that has preceded it. It isn't just about the initiating remark but the style and care taken with the follow up. Learning how that works, from the inside of a campaign, was of enormous value to me. Any attempt to regulate or disinfect this flow would make King Canute seem like a man with a plan. The only role for parties is that they should "be the change they seek" and not indulge in name calling or personality politics. May I wish you the best of luck with encouraging that.

There is no question that those who have spent more time closer to the flame of power than I, incur anonymous wrath exponentially proportional to their proximity. If this abuse degenerates into hate crime (based on race, religion, gender or sexual orientation) it seems to me that the legislation already exists. If it is "grossly offensive" then it may also be prosecutable. What is missing are the 200 or so detectives required to regularly follow this vitriol back to source so that such prosecutions can be expedited. Given that this is a new area, noisy, frequent and obvious justice might help to begin with.

I don't see a role for special or new legislation in this area – it is at the very heart of our democratic process that our sovereign legislative body is made up of normal human beings who come from us, behave like us and have no rights other than those we all share. Any path away from this ideal would not be neither just or British.

There will always be an element of rough and tumble to politics both during the electoral process and in the execution of power. My recent experience hasn't been any worse than I expected and certainly isn't sufficient to dissuade me from standing again. I fear that to suggest politicians require special protections from intimidation beyond those enjoyed by their fellow nationals plays into a narrative by which those at Westminster are further insulated from the effect of their actions and their constituents. This isn't the time for that.

Good luck with your deliberations

Sean Dromgoole
Your Labour Candidate for Somerton and Frome

Lord Bew
Chairman, Committee on Standards in Public Life

19th July 2017

Dear Lord Bew

I write regarding the review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life on intimidation experienced by parliamentary candidates, and the broader implications of this for other holders of public office. I currently serve as a borough councillor, having been elected for the first time in May 2016. I have never stood as a parliamentary candidate, but have participated in support of electoral campaigns at both local and national level.

Whilst candidates can choose the extent to which they engage with social media platforms, other requirements are compulsory. At present, the electoral system appears to do little to help candidates and those elected to protect themselves. In particular, before each election a 'Statement of Persons Nominated' is published which includes each candidate's full name and home address. There is further disclosure of home addresses on the ballot paper. I understand that parliamentary candidates can ask to withhold their home address, but I am unaware of any similar provision for local candidates. Rather than using a residential address for the identification of candidates, these days an online photograph of each would be more useful for voters.

Once elected, for those in local government the Localism Act 2011 s29(5) requires that the Monitoring Officer of a relevant authority, other than a parish council, must secure (a) that a copy of the authority's register of interests is available for inspection at a place in the authority's area at all reasonable hours, and (b) that the register is published on the authority's website. Many local councillors own the house in which they live and are therefore required to include details of that land ownership in the register of interests which must be available online throughout the world. Thus, it is difficult for those who seek and hold office to protect their home addresses from public disclosure. Section 32 of the Localism Act allows a Monitoring Officer to withhold information where there may be a risk of violence or intimidation, but where there is no initial risk, the information will be online until such time as a risk develops.

I acknowledge the need for high standards in public life. Whilst local residents may sometimes have a legitimate need to know the personal financial interests and land ownership of their elected representatives to avoid a potential conflict of interest,

publication of the register of interests worldwide on the internet is disproportionate and I do not believe that it is objectively justified. In my view it would be sufficient for local residents to have access to the register of interests at the council offices where local government officers could supervise access and deter potential misuse. Public access to electoral registers is limited in a similar way at council offices and libraries.

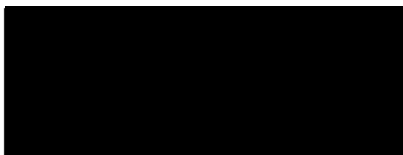
In general, I do not believe that publishing the home addresses of elected representatives online is wise or necessary, particularly when email and contact via office postal addresses is so easy. From a personal security perspective, those in office need to be careful about who knows their holiday dates and other absences. It would be very easy for someone with knowledge of an absence to find a home address, increasing the risk of burglary. Such ready access to home addresses makes the perpetration of any attack, intimidation or harassment far easier. There is also the risk of identity fraud. Personal security for MPs is tight and whilst local councillors do not deal with matters of the same gravity, there ought to be greater consideration given to personal security for local representatives.

I have not stood in a parliamentary election and would hesitate to do so in the current climate; my wife and child are not involved in politics and I have no desire to expose them to the kind of aggravation which has been reported recently. I do not know whether other potential candidates are deterred from seeking election because of this, but I would not be surprised if some were.

In conclusion, I believe that all candidates should be easily identifiable to voters and elected representatives contactable by those they represent. Also, it is reasonable for there to be a register of private interests to avoid conflicts of interest. However, publication of home addresses is unnecessary as contact can be made via office addresses or by email. Publication of the registers of local government member's interests on the internet, allowing worldwide access, is disproportionate and I believe the law requiring it should be changed.

I would be grateful for your consideration of these points.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of John Woolley.

John Woolley

From: Peter Teague

Dear Lord Bew,

I understand that you are investigating the 'intimidation' of parliamentary candidates. It's a phenomenon that has been growing, and is of course endemic across all walks of life. I suspect it has always been around and is now growing thanks to the anonymity offered by (un)social media.

I don't know your timescales but expect the process will take a year or two. Assuming that, I suggest it would be beneficial to see a few quick fixes which may help contain the problem while you progress towards the main report. Two examples:

- On the non-social media front, I would like to see MPs rein back completely on fatuous remarks and jibes during parliamentary proceedings - PMQs is an obvious candidate. Points raised there can be completely petty and meaningless, while, despite that, many MPs clearly relish it. If it is acceptable that one MP taunt an MP from another party, then it becomes acceptable for they themselves to be taunted by members of the public. That then feeds on itself. You may recall that in her first PMQ as PM, Teresa May taunted Jeremy Corbyn in her early remarks - why? It was crowd-pleasing for the Tories I suppose, but does absolutely nothing to garner respect for the parliament (I support neither party!). Leaders have occasionally said they plan to interact in a more positive manner but that approach usually falls apart.
- If MPs are attacked by anonymous users via Twitter and the like, I suggest they stop using these platforms and broadcast the reasons for doing so. That may help prompt the providers to monitor 'extreme' material. There are plenty of other ways for MPs to keep people up to date and for members of the public to contact them. Ideally, I think social media should not offer anonymity. No doubt there are a few circumstances in which anonymity is desirable, but there are methods outside the relatively new social media mechanisms.

Good luck with the review.

Peter Teague