



# End of Year Report **2023/24**

April 2024

# Commissioner's foreword



We know extremism can pose a threat to our societies and to our values. But the horrendous terrorist attack against Israel on 7 October 2023 should remind us all just how high the stakes are.

Left unchecked, extremist ideologies can manifest in the most horrendous acts of violence imaginable. It is incumbent on all of us to speak up against such evil. I will certainly never tire of doing so, nor relax in our mission to challenge extremism across the board.

The Israel-Hamas war has energised extremists in this country. We must be vigilant in protecting against the encroachment of extremist narratives that threaten community cohesion, and we must be steadfast in our defence of democratic values.

There is much more to do beyond even this challenge. One year on, I am pleased to say that the Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) continues to deliver on the asks made of us in the Independent Review of Prevent.

In response to recommendations made by Sir William Shawcross, the CCE rolled out training for Prevent practitioners, developed a programme to upskill civil servants' understanding of extremist ideology, and continues to work with ministers to tackle the ideological drivers of radicalisation.

We also launched a new Prevent Standards and Compliance Unit, which will allow us to process and investigate complaints about Prevent, while increasing public trust and confidence.

We will continue to advise and scrutinise the government response as it delivers on all the recommendations made by the Independent Review of Prevent.

This year, we also published new research on the study of extremism in the UK, the radicalisation evidence base, involuntary celibate (incel) networks, and blasphemy-related extremism. Through our ongoing programme of events, we brought together experts to build our understanding of the current and future extremism landscape.

The CCE continues to provide much-needed leadership on the counter-extremism agenda. Progress has been made but there is still much to be done. The CCE exists to ensure good intentions can be turned into good outcomes. We will continue to provide the independent advice and scrutiny required to strengthen the government's ability to tackle extremism root and branch, and we will continue to speak up against the horrors of extremist ideology.

Robin Simcox  
Commissioner for Countering Extremism



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## Activities over the last 12 months

**The CCE has continued to progress its engagement with government over the last 12 months. A full list of the Commissioner’s engagements between April 2023 and March 2024 can be found in annex B.**

In October 2023, Robin delivered his first public address to the Royal United Services Institute since being appointed Commissioner for Countering Extremism. Delivered in the wake of the Hamas terrorist attacks of October 7th, his speech outlined the number of extremism challenges facing the UK and some of the ways in which the CCE is responding.

Robin was interviewed on BBC Newsnight, during which he said he was “out of patience” with “cultural timidity” in tackling radical ideologies in the UK. He also wrote an article for *The Times* on growing rates of antisemitism.

In March 2024, Robin went on a fact-finding visit to the USA, where he gave a speech at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies on the international influences on extremism in the UK and USA.



**“Extremism not only offers no gifts to humanity. It seeks to remove rights hard fought for. To tie us in knots over issues long settled.”**

Robin Simcox

In October 2023, the CCE held a high-level policy roundtable event at Wilton Park to discuss the implementation of an operational Prevent Disruptions framework to tackle challenges to non-violent extremism. The roundtable event included an opening speech delivered by former Home Security Rt Hon Suella Braverman MP, and provided a report to support ongoing development of the Prevent Disruptions policy.

In December 2023, Robin gave evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee on the policing of protests. The committee put questions to Robin on a range of issues, including the need for additional legislation and the increasingly extreme rhetoric being aired in the UK around Israel and Jews since October 7th.

In March, Robin went on a fact-finding visit to Washington, D.C., culminating in a keynote address to the Centre for Strategic and International Studies think tank.

The CCE held its second Policy Week in March 2024 for civil servants. The packed week-long agenda included reflections on the one-year anniversary of the Independent Review of Prevent, and a session on the conflict between Israel and Hamas. As with the inaugural Policy Week, these events were attended by over 1,000 people across many different departments.

The CCE's Academic and Practitioner Counter Extremism Network (APCEN) is an internal forum for counter-extremism government practitioners and academics. APCEN held two in-person events in September 2023, and in January 2024. In September, APCEN saw keynote presentations about conspiracy beliefs and violent extremism, Barelvi extremism, and pathways to Extreme Right-Wing terrorism. In January, APCEN focused on the Israel-Hamas conflict with presentations on Hamas activism in the UK, the response of schools to the conflict, and how extremist groups have sought to exploit divisions created or exacerbated by the conflict.



# Independent Review of Prevent

The CCE is a key partner for the implementation of multiple recommendations made in the Independent Review of Prevent (IRP), and in the government's response to the IRP.

The CCE rolled out a suite of ideology training sessions for frontline Prevent practitioners all over the country. Tailored to the specific needs of different regions, these training sessions, which cover a range of ideologies, ensure that practitioners have access to the training they need to ensure Prevent is delivered with the sophistication required.

We worked closely with Government to implement the IRP in letter and spirit. This included sitting on advisory boards for a range of issues, and working with government on extremism thresholds.

The IRP recommended establishing a Standards and Compliance Unit (Stacu) to address and investigate complaints from both Prevent practitioners and the public. Stacu was launched on 28 February 2024. As Commissioner for Countering Extremism, Robin has assumed the responsibility of overseeing all issues concerning Prevent that are raised with Stacu.

The primary objective of Stacu is to ensure Prevent is delivered properly within the direction set by ministers and the IRP. Stacu will also fulfil the oversight function of the Prevent system, by analysing complaints data and feeding this information back to the Prevent Ministerial Oversight Board for action. Stacu has committed to publishing annual reports that detail the work undertaken throughout the year, including numbers and trends across complaints and subsequent investigations. The first annual report will be published in March 2025.





Credit: Center for Strategic and International Studies

## Published research

The CCE remains committed to building the evidence base around extremism and its impact on England and Wales. In the last 12 months, the CCE has published four academic papers:

- ‘The National research environment for the study of extremism in the UK’ argues that due to systemic problems in studying extremism and in communicating the findings of such study, there are likely to be substantial gaps in the knowledge base around extremism in the UK.<sup>1</sup>
- ‘Predicting harm among incels’ was the largest study of incels to date. The paper suggests that a social cohesion and mental health approach may be more appropriate to address this issue than a counter-terrorism lens.<sup>2</sup>
- ‘Radicalisation discourse’ argues that there is little empiric evidence to support the image of the radicalised person as ‘vulnerable’.<sup>3</sup> The evidence base to support radicalisation and deradicalisation also lacks a proper empirical foundation.
- ‘Understanding and Responding to Blasphemy Extremism in the UK’ seeks to understand the blasphemy phenomenon and associated violent responses, specifically in relation to satirical depictions of Islam’s Prophet Muhammad.<sup>4</sup>

The CCE has also commissioned work due to be published within the next 12 months, assessing the role played by ideology in terrorism and radicalisation.

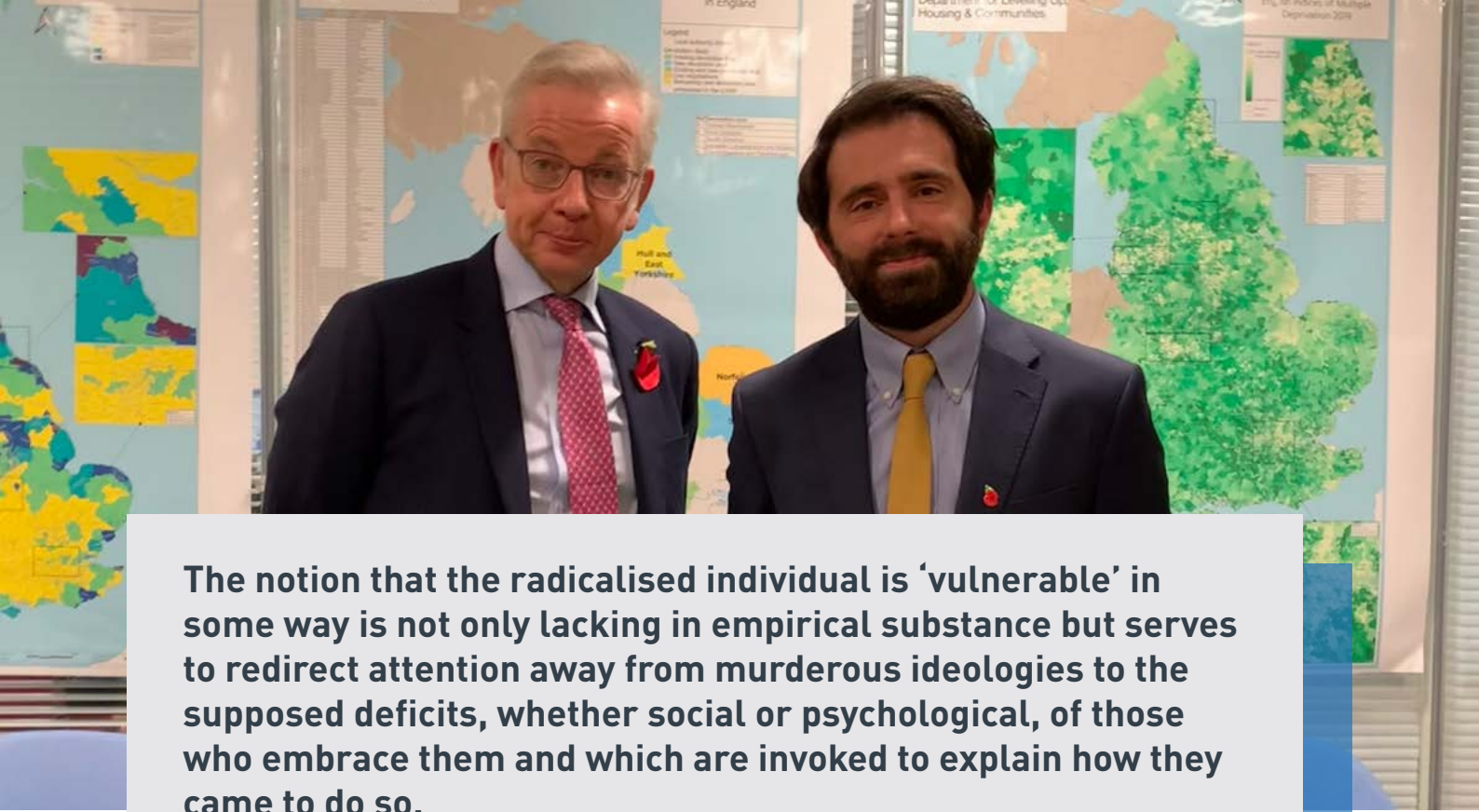
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1 [The national research environment for the study of extremism in the UK \(accessible\)](#) – GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

2 [Predicting harm among incels \(involuntary celibates\)](#) – GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

3 [Radicalisation+Discourse+2.pdf](#) ([publishing.service.gov.uk](http://publishing.service.gov.uk))

4 [Understanding and Responding to Blasphemy Extremism in the UK \(accessible\)](#) – GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))



**The notion that the radicalised individual is ‘vulnerable’ in some way is not only lacking in empirical substance but serves to redirect attention away from murderous ideologies to the supposed deficits, whether social or psychological, of those who embrace them and which are invoked to explain how they came to do so.**

**Given that brainwashing, grooming and vulnerability tropes serve to minimise the role of agency in the radicalisation process, it is not surprising that terrorist offenders would use these very same tropes for the purpose of minimising their individual culpability in joining a terrorist group.**

“Radicalisation Discourse: Consensus Points, Evidence Base and Blind Spots, Cottee (2024)”

Since early 2023, the CCE has onboarded a variety of subject matter experts to support the Commission in providing advice across different ideologies. Our subject matter experts have a wide range of expertise, including the Extreme Left-Wing, antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, Islamist Extremism and the Extreme Right-Wing.

As an arm’s length body of the Home Office, our budget and spending are negotiated with the Home Office. They are subject to Home Office finance policy and HM Treasury rules, including value for public money, and follow systems and processes for HR and procurement. The CCE’s budget allocation and expenditure for 2023 to 2024 is in annex A.

While we are not covered by the Freedom of Information Act, we received four Freedom of Information requests over the last 12 months and, in order to provide transparency wherever possible, responded to them all.



# Headlines on CCE work

**UK permits antisemitism, says counter-extremism adviser**

– BBC

**Blasphemy demos ‘are growing in radicalism’**

– The Times

**Pro-Palestinian protests ‘making London no-go zone for Jews’**

– The Telegraph

**UK is ‘permissive environment for antisemitism’, says extremism tsar**

– The Times

**Government must be ‘faster and bolder’ in tackling antisemitism, warns extremism tsar**

– The Telegraph

**UK anti-extremism tsar calls for Iran’s Revolutionary Guards to be listed as terrorists**

– Financial Times

**Hamas and Iran could pose a threat on the streets of the UK, Government anti-extremism tsar to warn**

– Daily Mail

**Complaints process and oversight from Government’s counter-terror scheme launched**

– The BBC

**Incels 30 times more likely to be autistic, study finds**

– The Telegraph

**UK ‘lacks knowledge of Islamist extremism because research focuses on far-Right’**

– The Telegraph

# Highlights from the last 12 months



## APRIL 2023

- Robin met with No.10 to discuss counter extremism concerns and priorities.



## MAY 2023

- Robin was interviewed by CTC Sentinel on the UK extremism landscape, the role of the CCE in advising government and the Independent Review of Prevent.
- Robin visited the Birmingham City Council Prevent Team to discuss community engagement and to participate in a community roundtable.



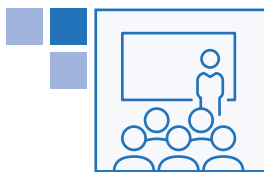
## JUNE 2023

- The CCE piloted its regional ideology training in Newcastle.
- Robin met Dame Diana Johnson MP, Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee.



## JULY 2023

- Robin attended the CONTEST refresh launch.
- Robin met with the French Embassy to discuss the French and UK terrorism landscapes.



## SEPTEMBER 2023

- Robin attended an academic roundtable on Prevent alongside Suella Braverman MP (then Home Secretary).
- Robin delivered a speech to Counter Extremism Group young leaders in National Security Fellowship on the CCE's work on policy, research, and government scrutiny.
- Robin engaged with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to discuss anti-Ahmadi hatred in the UK.
- The CCE held its first in-person APCEN event in London.



## OCTOBER 2023

- Robin delivered a speech to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) on the extremist threat to the UK, including the dangers posed by Hamas and Iranian networks operating in the UK. He appeared on BBC's Newsnight and the Today programme, as well as Times radio to discuss these threats. Robin also wrote an article in The Times newspaper on rising antisemitism.
- The CCE held its first policy dialogue at Wilton Park – a roundtable event bringing together academics and policy makers to discuss a policy question.



## NOVEMBER 2023

- Robin met with Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP. They discussed the definition of extremism, blasphemy and CCE training.
- Robin met with Shadow Security Minister Dan Jarvis MP to discuss the future of counter extremism government policy.
- Robin delivered a speech at the DfE Prevent in Education Conference on disinformation, blasphemy and freedom of speech.
- Robin delivered a keynote speech at HSG Prevent Conference on the CCE's response to extremism in the UK.



## DECEMBER 2023

- Robin met with the Head of the French Counter-Terrorism co-ordination unit.
- Robin gave oral evidence to the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee on the policing of protests regarding Israel and Gaza and on the sufficiency of current legislation.



## JANUARY 2024

- The CCE held its second in person APCEN meeting in London.
- Robin met with James Cleverly MP, Home Secretary to discuss the key challenges for government on extremism.
- Robin met with the Tom Tugendhat MP, Minister for Security, to discuss the CCE's Standards and Compliance Unit.



## FEBRUARY 2024

- The CCE piloted its Higher Education Course with Kings College London to deliver learning to government practitioners on countering extremism.
- The CCE launched its Standards and Compliance Unit.
- Robin Simcox appeared on Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg.
- RUSI hosted a conversation between Robin Simcox and Ambassador Lipstadt on antisemitism.



## MARCH 2024

- The CCE ran its second Policy Week event.
- Robin gave a speech at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. on how international influences can impact domestic extremism.
- Robin met with a variety of senior US Government officials and think tanks to discuss the domestic and international extremism landscape.

# Annex A – finances

(2023/24)

The Commission’s budget for financial year 2023/24 is £1,767,000 per annum. This is in line with HM Treasury’s guidance on Managing Public Money (the consent for our expenditure was based on HM Treasury consent under the guidance in Box 2.6) and agreement from the Home Office.<sup>5</sup>

Up to the end of January 2024, the Commission has spent £1,010,041.

The Financial end of year forecast for 2023/24 is circa £1,475,000. This includes a £292,285 underspend due to delays in filling staff vacancies as a result of the extended time taken by Civil Service to deliver pre-employment checks, and the CCE delivering StaCU under budget.

<b>Total budget</b>	<b>£1,767,000</b>
<b>Expenditure up to end January 2024</b>	<b>£1,010,041</b>
Pay	£740,790
Non-Pay (Includes: IT & Accommodation, CCE projects, Staff Learning and Development, and Staff Travel and Subsistence)	£269,249
Forecasted spend February and March (pay and non-pay)	c£464,959
Underspend	£292,285
Financial end of year forecast 2023/24	circa £1,475,000*

(\*Subject to change as per business need)

Robin Simcox claimed £1,286.37 in expenses from April 2023 to the end of January 2024.

5 HM Treasury. 2019. Managing public money, (accessed: 18 March 2021)(PDF 1.30MB) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65c4a3773f634b001242c6b7/Managing\\_Public\\_Money\\_-\\_May\\_2023\\_2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65c4a3773f634b001242c6b7/Managing_Public_Money_-_May_2023_2.pdf)

# Annex B – commissioner engagement

(April 2023 – March 2024)

To respect data protection requirements, organisations' names are listed rather than individuals, except in the case of politicians and academics.

The Commissioner's engagement includes one-to-one meetings, workshops, conferences, and group discussions.

## Central government, regulators and law enforcement

- Home Office
- Home Affairs Select Committee
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- Department for Education
- Department of Health and Social Care
- Ministry of Justice
- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- MI5
- Counter Terrorism Policing
- No.10
- Counter Terrorism Policing Wales

## Parliamentarians

- James Cleverly MP (as Home Secretary)
- Suella Braverman MP (as Home Secretary)
- Michael Gove MP (as Secretary of State for DLUHC)
- Dame Diana Johnson MP (as Home Affairs Committee Chair)
- Yvette Cooper MP (as Shadow Home Secretary)
- Dan Jarvis MP (as Shadow Security Minister)
- Tom Tugendhat MP (as Minister for Security)

## Other public sector

- Dame Sara Khan (as Independent Advisor for Social Cohesion and Resilience)
- Lord Walney (as Independent Adviser on Political Violence)

## Academics, experts and thinktanks

- Royal United Services Institute
- Counter Extremism Group
- Policy Exchange
- Coventry University
- Queen Mary University
- King's College London
- University College London
- Paris Sciences et Lettres Université
- Austrian Fund for the Documentation of Religiously Motivated Political Extremism
- Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences Po
- George Washington University
- Swedish Defence University

## Civil society

- Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Group
- Faith Matters
- Community Security Trust
- Tell MAMA
- Groundswell Project

## International

- French Embassy, London
- Department of Justice
- Department for Homeland Security
- Washington Institute for Near East Policy
- Centre for Strategic and International Studies
- Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt Department of State
- Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy
- British Embassy Washington
- Department of State
- United States National Security Council
- Department of the Treasury

