

Call for evidence launched to understand people's experiences of extremism and its impact on social cohesion

- Public urged to have their say in a major independent review into social cohesion and resilience to extremism
- Dame Sara Khan, Independent Adviser for Social Cohesion and Resilience, gathering evidence for key report
- Review to examine measures to protect and support victims, how we can strengthen social cohesion and build resilience in society against extremism

Victims and communities are being urged to share their experiences as part of a major independent review into the impacts of extremism.

Dame Sara Khan, the government's Independent Adviser for Social Cohesion and Resilience, today (7 April 2022) launched an 8 week call for evidence that will help examine the impact, harm, and response to extremism at a local level.

Dame Khan's review – commissioned by No.10 – aims to understand the breadth and depth of the impact on individuals, communities and social cohesion.

She wants to hear directly from those who have been targeted by extremists to understand the impact on their lives and the support they received. As well as representatives from local councils and civil society, members of the public are being asked to explain what has gone well and what more could be done. These responses will help her understand the impact extremism is having at a local level and what could be improved to protect and build up social cohesion.

Responses will help develop Sara's independent recommendations on how the government can better support and protect victims of extremism and those working to stamp it out, as well as communities that are affected.

Dame Sara Khan, Independent Adviser on Social Cohesion and Resilience, said:

As the former Counter-Extremism Commissioner I saw first-hand the impact of extremist and other divisive activity in our towns and cities. Too often, the response to those sowing hatred and division is slow and ineffective.

That is why I have been asked by the Prime Minister to examine what more is required to protect social cohesion and build resilience against extremism at a local level.

I will be seeking to hear from victims of extremism whose life-changing experiences are often unrecognised and from local authorities and communities who play an invaluable role. I will be taking an independent, impartial and evidence-based approach and I want to hear from all those who have experience of these issues. This public consultation will give everyone an opportunity to contribute.

Minister for Levelling Up Communities Kemi Badenoch said:

Our landmark Inclusive Britain strategy makes clear that we are a welcoming country whose strength lies within its communities. So, when people try to create divisions amongst us, we must be unwavering in our resolve to stay united.

By sharing your views, you will be helping ensure that our work to tackle extremism continues on the right track – so that risks in our communities are easily recognised and swiftly dealt with, and we can build resilience and promote social cohesion.

Our levelling up mission includes empowering communities – and this call to action is a great example of that ideal in action.

Brendan Cox, Co-Founder and Adviser, Together said:

I know first-hand the terrible impact extremism can have on individuals, families and our communities. This is a serious challenge for our society and it is vital we do more to respond to this threat. Sara's review examining how extremism impacts individuals, local communities and social cohesion is important and I encourage everyone to take part so she can build your views into her recommendations to the government.

Jo Broadwood, CEO, Belong – The Cohesion and Integration Network said:

Belong's own research has shown that local areas that prioritised social cohesion prior to and during the pandemic maintained stronger social connections, trust, neighbourliness and more positive attitudes towards others during the crisis. As such, actively attending to and maintaining social cohesion is a vital part of building social capital and supports communities and places to be resilient to the forces of division and polarisation, including violent extremism.

It is vital that we understand cohesion in this broader sense. We therefore welcome this call for evidence and encourage all those with a concern for building a more cohesive, inclusive society to

respond.