

Press release: Commission for Countering Extremism launches evidence drive

The independent Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) is today (Wednesday 11 July) launching an intensive period of evidence gathering with the aim of publishing a first-of-its-kind study into all forms of extremism.

Lead Commissioner Sara Khan says she is willing to be as radical as needed, when it comes to looking at how to counter extremism in the future.

Neither the issue of terrorism nor the government's counter terrorism strategy (which includes Prevent) are in the CCE's remit.

Lead Commissioner Sara Khan says she wants to show people the deep, chronic harm extremism causes in communities.

In the coming months, the CCE will review existing academic evidence on extremism, commission bespoke research and issue a public call for evidence. Sara wants to hear from victims, their families and all those that counter extremism.

The government has already committed to sharing information with the commission.

The CCE will also ask regulators, local councils and police forces, universities and other public and private bodies to share information on extremism.

The evidence drive and comprehensive study will, Sara explains, help build greater understanding of extremism and engage more people than ever in tackling it.

Marking the launch Sara reveals she has already met more than 300 experts and activists, and visited ten towns and cities.

She has identified critical issues for the Commission to investigate as part of its study:

- communities are deeply concerned about extremism – the CCE will investigate the scale of the problem; the changing tactics of extremists and the harm extremism causes in communities
- we have the start of a powerful counter extremism movement but brave individuals and groups face abuse and vilification – the CCE will investigate the current response to extremism and how we can help everyone to do more challenge extremism

- the public debate on extremism is increasingly polarised, leaving some nervous about speaking out – the CCE will consider how we can have a constructive and civilised debate on the issue

In a further announcement, Sara today confirms that she has created a new Expert Group to advise and challenge the CCE on its work.

The experienced and diverse panel includes grassroots activists; individuals with decades of frontline experience; leading figures on Far Right and Islamist extremism, experts on social media and campaigners on freedom of speech. (the full list is below).

The group will meet around four times over the coming year to advise and challenge the lead commissioner.

Sara was asked by the previous Home Secretary to lead the CCE in January.

In March, the CCE was formally launched as an independent body, with the publication of a charter outlining its independent role.

Sara agreed the following three objectives for her first year: publish a comprehensive study; engage widely, building a network of counter extremists; and establish a robust commission making recommendations about its future structure.

Today's announcements come after Lead Commissioner Sara Khan met the Home Secretary Sajid Javid to update him on the work of the CCE shortly after his appointment.

Lead Commissioner Sara Khan said:

This is an important moment for the commission as we move from our introductory phase to a period of intensive evidence gathering, with the aim of publishing a first-of-its-kind study.

I've already met with more than 300 experts and activists. Communities are deeply concerned about the impact of extremism.

Extremism is sowing division and hate, spreading fear and undermining democratic values and human rights.

But it's also complex and changing – in 2018 the old stereotypes of Far-Right thugs and Islamist hate preachers don't always apply.

Whether it's Far Right, Islamist or other forms of extremism, we need to investigate their changing tactics such as a new-found professionalism; the intellectualising of hate and abusing the power of social media.

There are brave, inspiring counter extremists up and down the country making a difference despite threats and abuse. I believe we

have the start of a powerful counter extremism movement.

We need to understand modern day extremism better, so we can help more people to challenge it. That is why this study is so important.

The public debate on extremism is increasingly polarised, leaving some nervous about speaking out. We need to investigate how we improve the debate around extremism, so it's more constructive.

We must be prepared to follow the evidence and to be as radical as necessary when it comes to countering extremism.

Evidence gathering

In the coming months, the CCE will:

- work with research experts to assess current academic evidence and pinpoint the gaps. The CCE will use the government definition of extremism as a starting point for this stage. Its work and research, however, will not be limited by this definition
- work with experts and activists at local and national levels, including government, to prioritise work to address the gaps
- use this assessment as a springboard to commission bespoke pieces of research on critical issues
- consult the public, including asking them to submit evidence, and visiting communities affected by extremism
- the government has already committed to sharing information with the commission – the CCE will also ask regulators, local councils and police forces, universities and other public and private bodies to share information on extremism

Expert Group

- Sir David Anderson KBE QC, former independent reviewer of terrorism legislation
- Jamie Bartlett, author and Director of the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media at Demos
- Professor Chetan Bhatt, Director, Centre for the Study of Human Rights,

LSE

- Dame Louise Casey DBE CB, led a review into opportunity and integration in some of our most isolated communities
- Sasha Havlicek, Chief Executive of the Institute of Strategic Dialogue
- Dr Azeem Ibrahim, author and Research Professor at the Strategic Studies Institute
- Sunder Katwala, Director, British Future
- Nick Lowles MBE, Chief Executive, Hope Not Hate
- Katie Morris, Head of Europe and Central Asia, Article 19
- Fiyaz Mughal OBE FCMI, founder and director of Faith Matters and founder of Tell Mama
- Pragna Patel, Director, Southall Black Sisters
- Sir Mark Rowley KB QPM, former Assistant Commissioner Metropolitan Police

Full biographies will be available on the [Commission's blog](#)