

## Agenda for a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on Thursday, 18 March 2021 at 4.00 pm in Virtual Remote Meeting

### Members of the Committee – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND INDEPENDENT GROUP
Azam D Green Kamran Hussain Watson Tait Shafiq	Pollard Bibby Riaz	Griffiths

### Alternates:

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND INDEPENDENT GROUP
Akhtar T Hussain Nazir Thirkill Salam	Townend Winnard Barker	Reid

### Notes:

- Please note that, under the current circumstances only Members and Alternates on the Committee will receive paper copies of the agenda, however the agenda and reports can be viewed on the Council's agenda and minutes website five clear working days in advance of the meeting.
- The meeting will be held remotely, Members and officers in advance of the meeting will be sent via email, instructions and a link on how to join the meeting remotely.**
- A webcast of the meeting will be available to view live on the Council's website at <https://bradford.public-i.tv/core/portal/home> and later as a recording.
- Approximately 30 minutes before the start time of the meeting the Governance Officer will set up the electronic conference arrangements initially in private and bring into the conference facility the Members and officers so that any issues can be raised before the start of the meeting. The officers presenting the reports at the meeting will have been advised by the Governance Officer of their participation and will be brought into the electronic meeting at the appropriate time.
- Members should be on their own when attending remotely and ensure that any confidential papers are not visible via the technology used.

Any Councillors or members of the public who wish to make a contribution at the meeting are asked to email [yusuf.patel@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:yusuf.patel@bradford.gov.uk) by **10.30 on Tuesday 16 March 2021** and request to do so. In advance of the meeting those requesting to participate will be advised if their proposed contribution can be facilitated and those participants that can be will be provided with details how to electronically access the meeting. Councillors and members of the public with queries regarding making representations to the meeting please email: [yusuf.patel@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:yusuf.patel@bradford.gov.uk)

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**From:**

Parveen Akhtar

City Solicitor

Agenda Contact: Tracey Sugden

Phone: 01274 424287

E-Mail: [tracey.sugden@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:tracey.sugden@bradford.gov.uk)**To:**

## **A. PROCEDURAL ITEMS**

### **1. ALTERNATE MEMBERS (Standing Order 34)**

The City Solicitor will report the names of alternate Members who are attending the meeting in place of appointed Members.

### **2. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

(Members Code of Conduct - Part 4A of the Constitution)

To receive disclosures of interests from members and co-opted members on matters to be considered at the meeting. The disclosure must include the nature of the interest.

An interest must also be disclosed in the meeting when it becomes apparent to the member during the meeting.

*Notes:*

- (1) Members may remain in the meeting and take part fully in discussion and voting unless the interest is a disclosable pecuniary interest or an interest which the Member feels would call into question their compliance with the wider principles set out in the Code of Conduct. Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to the Member concerned or their spouse/partner.*
- (2) Members in arrears of Council Tax by more than two months must not vote in decisions on, or which might affect, budget calculations, and must disclose at the meeting that this restriction applies to them. A failure to comply with these requirements is a criminal offence under section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.*
- (3) Members are also welcome to disclose interests which are not disclosable pecuniary interests but which they consider should be made in the interest of clarity.*
- (4) Officers must disclose interests in accordance with Council Standing Order 44.*

### **3. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS**

(Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 3B of the Constitution)

Reports and background papers for agenda items may be inspected by contacting the person shown after each agenda item. Certain reports and background papers may be restricted.

Any request to remove the restriction on a report or background paper

should be made to the relevant Strategic Director or Assistant Director whose name is shown on the front page of the report.

If that request is refused, there is a right of appeal to this meeting.

Please contact the officer shown below in advance of the meeting if you wish to appeal.

(Yusuf Patel - 01274 434579)

#### 4. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

No referrals have been made to this Committee up to and including the date of publication of this agenda.

### B. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTIVITIES

#### 5. UNIVERSAL CREDIT

1 - 18

The Strategic Director Corporate Resources will present a report (**Document “Z”**) which examines the progress of, and future plans for, the roll out of Universal Credit, the impact of Covid 19, and the arrangements in place to support Bradford residents.

**Recommended –**

**That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the progress being made in the roll-out of Universal Credit in the District.**

(Martin Stubbs – 01274 432056)

#### 6. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PREVENT STRATEGY

19 - 58

The Strategic Director, Place will present a report (**Document “AA”**) which outlines the approach to delivering the national Prevent strategy in the Bradford district and highlights progress made in the last twelve months against the District Prevent Action Plan.

**Recommended –**

**That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee acknowledge the progress on work undertaken in implementing the Prevent agenda in Bradford and its approach to supporting vulnerable people.**

(Ian Day – 01274 433507)

**7. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21**

59 - 68

The Chair of the Committee will present **Document “AB”** to which is appended the work programme for the Committee for 2020/21.

**Recommended –**

- (1) That members consider and comment on the areas of work included in the work programme.**
- (2) That members consider any detailed scrutiny reviews that they may wish to conduct.**

(Mustansir Butt – 01274 432574)

THIS AGENDA AND ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER

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## Report of the Strategic Director Corporate Resources to the meeting of the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 18 March 2021

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**Z****Subject:****Universal Credit****Summary statement:**

Universal Credit was first introduced in the Bradford District towards the end of 2015, replacing six existing benefits and tax credits (often referred to as legacy benefits) for working-age claimants. The roll-out of Universal Credit has been incremental, with different household types falling within its scope over time.

The latest data available from the DWP shows that the number of households in the Bradford district in receipt of Universal Credit (51%) now exceeds the number of households in receipt of legacy benefits. The DWP forecast that the full roll-out of Universal Credit, nationally, will be completed in 2024.

This report examines the progress of, and future plans for, the roll out of Universal Credit, the impact of Covid 19, and the arrangements in place to support residents.

**EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:**

There are no Equality and Diversity issues for the Council arising from this report given Universal Credit is a national Government scheme; however any national policy decisions about Universal Credit impact on the residents of Bradford district hugely.

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Joanne Hyde  
Strategic Director, Corporate Resources

**Portfolio:****Leader of Council**

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Phone: (01274) 432056  
E-mail: [martin.stubbs@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:martin.stubbs@bradford.gov.uk)

**Overview & Scrutiny Area:****Corporate**

## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. Universal Credit was first introduced in the Bradford District towards the end of 2015, replacing six existing benefits and tax credits (often referred to as legacy benefits) for working-age claimants. The roll-out of Universal Credit has been incremental, with different household types falling within its scope over time.
- 1.2. The latest data available from the DWP shows that the number of households in the Bradford district in receipt of Universal Credit (51%) now exceeds the number of households in receipt of legacy benefits. The DWP forecast that the full roll-out of Universal Credit, nationally, will be completed in 2024.
- 1.3. This report examines the progress of, and future plans for, the roll out of Universal Credit, the impact of Covid 19, and the arrangements in place to support residents.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Universal Credit for working-age claimants has gradually been introduced across the Bradford District since November 2015. The benefits and tax credits being replaced by Universal Credit, often referred to as “legacy benefits”, are;
  - Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
  - Income-based Employment and Support Allowance
  - Income Support
  - Working Tax Credit
  - Child Tax Credit
  - Housing Benefit
- 2.2. Pension-age claimants do not fall within the scope of Universal Credit. The Government is not expected to confirm any decisions about the future of Housing Benefit for pension-age claimants until full implementation of Universal Credit approaches.
- 2.3. Those in receipt of Universal Credit are either working-age households that were previously in receipt of one or more legacy benefit and had a change of circumstances that required them to move onto Universal Credit, a process known as Natural Migration, or are households that have made a new claim (except in limited circumstances, legacy benefits are closed to new claimants).
- 2.4. From a date still to be announced, DWP will move all remaining legacy benefit claimants to Universal Credit. As part of their ‘test and learn’ approach, DWP began a pilot scheme in Harrogate to better understand and improve the systems for moving claimants across, and to identify their support needs. However, the pilot was suspended due to Covid-19. DWP estimates that the completion date, nationally, for the roll out of Universal Credit will be September 2024.
- 2.5. Between 2015 and early 2019, differing arrangements were in place to help claimants prepare and make a claim for Universal Credit; delivered primarily by Customer Services, and by Citizens Advice and Incommunities on behalf of the Council. The Government introduced new arrangements for the provision of support from, 1 April 2019. Citizens Advice has been contracted to provide support through

a new, national, service – Help to Claim.

- 2.6. Similarly, local, and national, arrangements are in place, or have been developed, to help the most vulnerable to adapt and cope with the requirements of Universal Credit and the way payments are made, such as; increasing financial and digital literacy and capability, increasing Universal Credit payment flexibility, and delivering work experience and work training programmes.
- 2.7. Covid-19 has had a significant impact on residents and businesses across the district. Household incomes have, for many, decreased as a result of increased unemployment, businesses taking advantage of the furlough scheme for its workers, and a reduction in self-employed earnings.
- 2.8. To mitigate the impact on low income households, the government increased the standard allowance in Universal Credit and the basic element in Working Tax Credit for one year from April 2020. Both increased by £20 per week on top of planned annual uprating and will remain in place until 31 March 2021.
- 2.9. This report considers progress on the roll-out of Universal Credit, the impact that Covid-19 has had on residents, and the additional support available to them.

### **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

#### ***Progress of Universal Credit Roll-out***

- 3.1. Previous reports have mainly focused on the impact on the housing benefit caseload, the challenges and support for residents making and maintaining a new UC claim and on the financial and other impacts for households moving to Universal Credit (UC). Identifying progress in terms of UC roll-out more broadly has been more difficult. However, as the number of households claiming UC has increased, and data reporting by the DWP has improved, a clearer picture of progress is emerging. This almost linear, if somewhat lengthy, transition from legacy benefits to UC has been complicated by the impact of Covid-19.
- 3.2. When UC was first introduced there were just over 30,000 working-age Housing Benefit claimants (Table 1). Since then, a large proportion of them moved to UC because they had a change of circumstances that required them to; a process DWP calls natural migration. The rate at which claimants migrated was relatively low initially, but increased significantly from 2018 onwards as the scope of UC was expanded. From 2019, all but those in receipt of the Severe Disability Premium (SDP) or who live in Supported Exempt Accommodation (SEA) were required to claim UC for their housing costs. As at December 2020, there were 16,000 working-age housing benefit claimants remaining; a reduction of 14,000 (47%) from when UC was first introduced.
- 3.3. The reduction in the housing benefit caseload during 2020 was less than in 2018 and 2019. There are likely two main reasons for this. Firstly, the less able a claimant is to secure employment, the less likely it is that they will have a change of circumstances that requires them to claim UC; this is increasingly likely to be the case for much of the remaining caseload. Secondly, but to a much lesser extent, the

Government announced funding for the ‘Everyone In’ scheme in June 2020. The scheme provides help to those who are, or are at risk of, sleeping rough, and at risk from Covid-19. This can include the provision of emergency accommodation. As an exception to prevailing UC requirements, some of those provided temporary accommodation through this scheme must claim housing benefit for their housing costs, not UC.

**Table 1: Reduction in Working-age Housing Benefit Caseload**

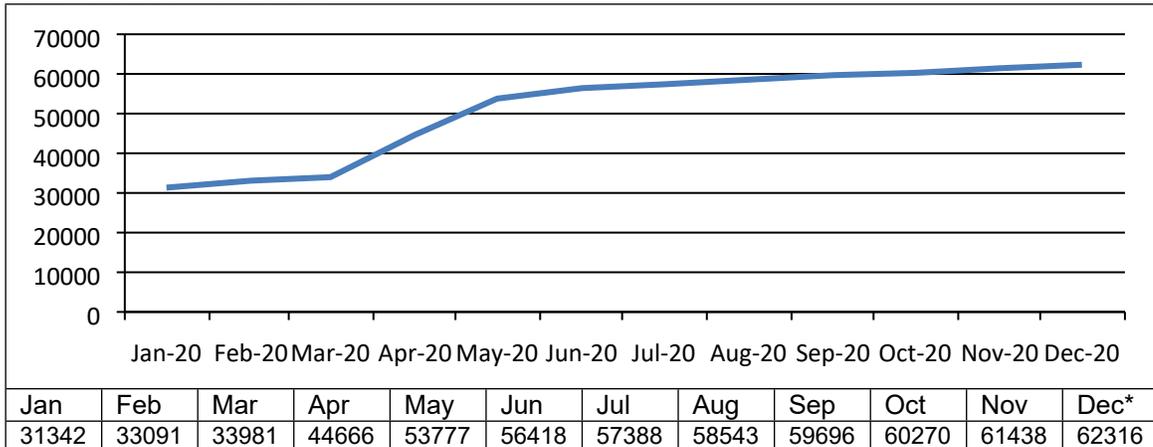
	2015	2016	2017	2018*	2019	2020
<b>UC Eligibility</b>	Single claimants	Single claimants	Single claimants	Singles and Families ≤2 children	All (except SDP&SEA)	All (except SDP&SEA)
<b>W/A HB Caseload**</b>	30,188	29,363	28,811	24,128	18,638	16,036
<b>Annual Reduction</b>		825	552	4,683	5,490	2,602
<b>Total Reduction</b>		825	1,377	6,060	11,550	14,152

\*UC closed to new applications January to May 2018

\*\*Working-age housing benefit caseload as at December in each year

- 3.4. The effect of Government’s response to Covid-19 on household incomes can be seen clearly in table 2. There was a sharp rise in the number of households claiming UC between the middle of March and May, which coincides with the first lockdown, and then continued to rise, but at a lower rate.

**Table 2: UC Claimant Count**



\*As at 10 December

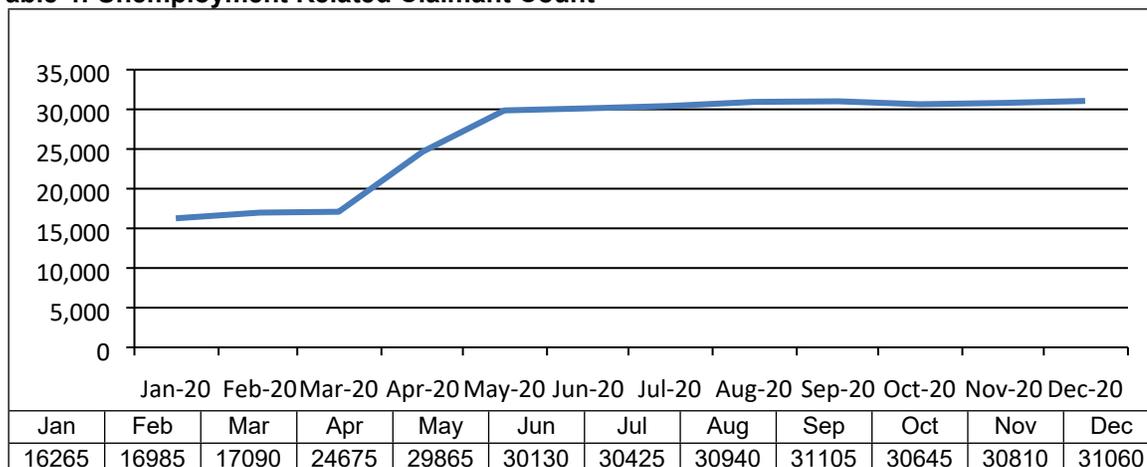
- 3.5. It should be noted that for some it will be the first time that they have made a benefit claim. As the economy begins to recover a proportion of these will end their UC claim. However, those households that were already in receipt of a legacy benefit, such as child tax credit, before claiming UC will not be able revert back and will continue to claim UC. Except in very limited circumstances (see 3.17) legacy benefits are closed to new claims.
- 3.6. As at January 2020, there were 31,342 households across the district claiming UC. This has increased significantly during 2020 so that by January 2021 there were 63,134 households with a UC claim (Table 3). Of these, 19,380 households are in work, 43,754 are not in work (It should be noted that some of those not in work are not required to look for work, for example because they have a young child).

**Table 3: Work Status of UC Claimants by Job Centre**

to 14/01/21	Worth House	Eastbrook Court	Westfield House	Total
Preparing for work	405	1288	786	2479
Planning for work	189	738	527	1454
Working (no requirements)	2167	5312	2814	10293
Working (with requirements)	1525	4494	3068	9087
No work requirements	1899	6149	3874	11922
Searching for work	3767	13647	10485	27899
<b>Total</b>	<b>9952</b>	<b>31628</b>	<b>21554</b>	<b>63134</b>

- 3.7. Under UC a broader span of claimants are required to look for work than under Jobseeker's Allowance. At December 2020 there were 31,060 people across the district claiming UC principally for the reason of being unemployed and it is this figure that is typically quoted as the Claimant Count Unemployment figure for the district. The figure includes those still claiming the legacy Job Seekers Allowance benefit and those claiming the unemployment-related element of Universal Credit. In some cases UC claimants are not unemployed but are eligible because of low wages and hours. This is increasingly so as more people are moved onto UC.
- 3.8. 31,060 people equates to 9.4% of the working-age population (those aged 16-64). The Bradford District unemployment-related claimant rate is the highest in West Yorkshire and significantly above the rate for the Leeds City Region (6.6%) and for the UK (6.3%). In terms of all local authorities outside London, Bradford has the 8th highest rate in the country. In terms of city local authorities - the 4th after Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Hull.
- 3.9. The unemployment-related claimant has risen by 13,970 since March 2020. This represents an 82% increase since March compared to a UK increase of 106%. Table 4 below shows how the count increased throughout 2020.

**Table 4: Unemployment Related Claimant Count**



- 3.10. The 18-24 years old claimant count rate at December 2020 was particularly high. It was 7.8% (3,155 claimants) in March, and by December this had increased to 14.7% (6,755 claimants); an 87.6% increase over that period.

- 3.11. The latest figures available from DWP (August 2020) indicate that at least 50% of benefit claimants now claim UC. Table 1, Appendix 1, shows claimant count by Parliamentary Constituency as at August 2020, and also provides a breakdown of progress by benefit type. This information is provided for interest only; the differences between constituencies are not meaningful in any way.

### Benefit Cap

- 3.12. As at January 2021, there are around 270 households that have a benefit cap applied to their Housing Benefit, compared to 480 at the same time in 2020. It is not possible to apportion the causes of this reduction, but it will be because the household has; migrated to UC; has had a change in circumstances, such as securing employment, which means they are no longer capped; or they have left housing benefit entitlement entirely, such as; finding employment, moving out of the district, bereavement, reaching state pension age etc.

### Severe Disability Premium

- 3.13. The Severe Disability Premium (SDP) is not a benefit in itself, but rather a premium that exists within other benefits. The SDP can be added to Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Housing Benefit.
- 3.14. From 16 January 2019, those in receipt of the SDP were prevented from moving to UC, and new benefit claimants with a SDP could claim housing benefit. The restrictions were removed from 27 January 2021. This means that no new claims for a legacy benefit can be made (except in limited circumstances, see 3.17). Existing housing benefit claims will continue until the claimant is required to move to claim UC. Currently, there are around 340 working-age housing benefit claimants currently in receipt of the SDP.
- 3.15. Those in receipt of a SDP within their Income Support, JSA or ESA in the month before they claim UC, and continue to meet the eligibility conditions for SDP, will be considered for a new Transitional Element (there is no SDP element in UC). However, people who receive a SDP only within their Housing Benefit and those claiming benefits for the first time are not eligible for the transitional element. There are three levels of transitional element;
- £405 a month where joint claimants were both receiving SDP.
  - £285 a month for eligible single claimants and eligible couples where only one member is eligible for SDP
  - £120 a month for eligible single claimants and couples where only one member is eligible for SDP, who have been determined as having limited capability for work-related activity
- 3.16. It should be noted that the amount of support that a household receives will be limited to an amount to compensate only for the loss of SDP; which means that any other reductions in a claimant's entitlement, as a consequence of moving to UC, will not be compensated. Further, the transitional element is designed to decrease over time, so that it will eventually be phased out.

## Supported Accommodation

- 3.17. Supported accommodation can be best described as any housing scheme where housing, support and sometimes care services are provided to help people to live as independently as possible in the community. There are around 1,300 claimants living in supported accommodation across the district at any one time.
- 3.18. Many residents in supported accommodation will claim both UC and Housing Benefit, the latter for support with their housing costs. The Government has yet to make a decision on if, or how, working-age residents in supported accommodation will move to having their housing costs met through UC; or if other arrangements will be introduced. Residents in supported accommodation will, therefore, continue to claim Housing Benefit until Government makes a decision. This also means that, other than Pension-age claimants that do not fall within the scope of UC, residents in supported accommodation are the only group required to make a new claim for housing benefit
- 3.19. The local authority receives subsidy from the DWP towards the cost of Housing Benefit that is paid. Normally this subsidy is 100% of the amount paid but in supported accommodation this subsidy can be less; and any shortfall has to be met by the local authority.
- 3.20. Should the landlord be a registered social landlord the amount of subsidy received is 100% of the benefit award. However in cases where the landlord is a registered charity or a not for profit organisation the local authority must refer the rent to the Rent Officer. We can receive 100% subsidy up to the Rent Officers valuation but any Housing Benefit paid above that valuation will receive no subsidy or if the claimant falls into a protected group only partial subsidy. Legislation does not permit us to simply restrict payments at the Rent Officers valuation.
- 3.21. In 2019/20 unsubsidised Housing Benefit for the supported housing sector amounted to £676,764. The amount for financial year 2020/21 at December 2020 was £529,719, and is forecast to be £686,689 by the end of the year. This shortfall has to be met from Council budget.
- 3.22. There is a risk that, if the sector continues to expand at the present rate and the expansion is by providers who are not registered social landlords, the cost to the Council will increase. Where the Council are commissioning services it should, where possible, be with a registered provider in order to mitigate financial loss through unsubsidised Housing Benefit.

## ***UC Roll-out Timetable***

- 3.23. The last DWP forecast stated that UC roll-out will be completed by September 2024. However, this forecast was made in 2019, and will not take into account the impact of Covid-19. It is not known what, if any, impact the increase in the rate of legacy benefits claimants moving to UC during 2020 will have on plans, or capacity, for the roll-out of UC. Similarly, the rate of economic recovery and the on-going effectiveness and duration of government's business support schemes will also affect those considerations.

- 3.24. The timing and manner in which Managed Migration is to be implemented is still to be announced, and is dependent upon the outcome of pilot arrangements to test the approach. The government has undertaken to pilot 10,000 cases before it rolls out Managed Migration nationally. The Managed Migration pilot scheme that was running in Harrogate, the only pilot in operation, was suspended in March 2020 due to Covid-19. At that time, only 13 households had been migrated to UC. It is not known when piloting will recommence.
- 3.25. The timeline for the completion of the roll-out of UC has been revised a number of times since 2014. Given the ‘test and learn’ approach being taken by DWP, forecasting the completion of the roll-out has always been difficult. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has, at each stage, maintained that the roll-out of UC will take longer than DWP forecasts; saying that the ‘test and learn’ approach is naturally more prone to delay than acceleration. In March 2020, the OBR revised its own forecast for the completion of the UC roll-out to September 2026. Again, this forecast was made before the impact of Covid-19 began to manifest.

### ***Support for Claimants***

- 3.26. As previously reported (12 March 2020), DWP has made changes to UC over time to ease the financial shock of migrating to UC, or when making a new claim., These changes include reducing the waiting period to 5 weeks, as advance payments, split and more frequent payments, and a two week ‘run-on’ (non-repayable) payment of the benefit for existing HB, JSA(IB) and ESA(IB) claimants when they migrate to UC.
- 3.27. However, the waiting period before the first UC payment is received has always been a contentious Issue. Of particular concern is the impact that the 5 week wait has on household debt levels, rent arrears and food security. In October 2020, the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee published a report of its review of the impact of the waiting period. The Government has responded, saying that it does not intend to reduce the waiting period and that claimants can claim an advance payment so do not need to wait 5 weeks for their first payment.
- 3.28. Data analysis supplied to the review by the National Audit Office shows that 57% of households making a new claim received a repayable UC advance in the six months to February 2020, and that 80% of low-income households have their first UC payments reduced as they are more likely to claim an advance and have other debts to repay.
- 3.29. Payments not being made on time, or not being paid in full, are also often cited as contributing factors for the accumulation of rent arrears; problems that that DWP says it has worked on to address. The latest available figures show that 96% of new claims received their payment in full and on time, compared with 80% reported in the 12 March 2020 report; and that performance in respect of all claims receiving their full payment in full and on time was maintained at 98%. It should be noted that the latest figures published were for the April 2020 period. It is not known if, or to what extent, the increase in UC claims during 2020 has impacted on DWP’s payment performance

- 3.30. There have been more recent increases in financial support provided by Government. From 1 April 2020, in response to the impact of covid, the standard UC allowance was increased by £20 per week. This increase will remain in place until 31 March 2021. The Government has also increased the weekly Local Housing Allowance rates in 2020/21 – the maximum contribution towards housing costs – as set out in Table 5.

**Table 5: Local Housing Allowance Rates**

<b>Accommodation Type</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>Increase</b>
Shared Accommodation	£60.01	£68.30	£8.29
One bed	£80.55	£80.55	£0.00
Two bed	£97.81	£103.56	£5.75
Three bed	£111.83	£120.82	£8.99
Four bed	£123.58	£141.53	£17.95

- 3.31. As detailed in the 12 March 2020 UC report, Citizen’s Advice National Help to Claim service was established to support residents to make a claim for UC. The service was provided via telephone or webchat. Both the outbreak of covid, and the end of the EU Withdrawal transition period, has impacted on the provision of the service; requiring changes in the way the service is delivered. The demand from the help to claim service has increased by almost 300%, and there has been significant demand from Europeans living in the country needing help to apply for settled or pre-settled status. Bradford & Airedale Citizens Advice & Law Centre has provided a briefing, Appendix 2, of these impacts and on the work they have been doing to support residents during 2020.
- 3.32. In response to the pandemic, the DWP started to accept telephone claims from people who did not have access to the internet at home. Previously, telephone claims were only accepted from claimants who were not reasonably able to make and maintain an online claim. However, the Council’s Customer Services has remained open throughout the pandemic to help residents wanting to make a new online claim for UC, or to maintain their existing UC claim; and to provide access to IT for claimants that do not have online access themselves. Around 500 residents were helped with their UC claim during 2020.
- 3.33. The Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme provides means tested support by way of a reduction in the amount of council tax payable by low income households. The number of households claiming CTR has increased significantly during 2020 due to the impact of Covid-19. As at the end February 2021, there were 32,281 working-age CTR claimants compared to 27,208 at the same time in 2020; an increase of 18.6%. The government has provided £5.8m in additional funding for CTR claimants in 2020/21; providing each household with a further reduction in their bill of up to £150 (as detailed in the 7 January 2021 Council Tax Collection report).
- 3.34. Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) continues to provide those in most need with help with their housing costs. The policy aims in regard to awarding a DHP haven’t changed with the introduction of UC. However, greater flexibility, both in value of awards and the periods of awards, is being used to help UC claimants with rent arrears because of the length of time it takes for them to receive their first payment. By the end of December 2020, 822 UC claimants have received support.

- 3.35. As previously reported, the Council meets the cost of the Fuel Payments Scheme, run in conjunction with participating debt advice services. The scheme provides financial assistance in the form of Fuel Top Ups for those people who have a fuel meter up to a maximum of £80 per year, one off contributions of up to £300 towards fuel arrears, and payment of the £90 Debt Relief Order administration fee for suitable cases.
- 3.36. Winter grant funding was used to help households, who only have children under six, with the additional cost of gas and electricity because they were at home more during the pandemic. The scheme has helped 3,106 families with each family receiving £80 in two payments; one just before Christmas and the second at the beginning of February.
- 3.37. The No Child Cold scheme is accessed through the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and a selected number of partner organisations. The scheme is designed to help low-income families with children entitled to free school meals, who have increased fuel costs because of school closures. The Council and CAB make payments directly to utility companies; each payment under the scheme is £80. For households on a key or card meter the Council issues them a Paypoint voucher. As at 15 February, CAB report that 506 applications have been received, of which 459 had been paid to date, totalling £36,720; helping families with 1,326 children.
- 3.38. The Assisted Purchase Scheme provides an interest free loan (326 by the end of December 2020) to help applicants obtain essential furniture or white goods, both new and pre used items. The amount loaned is based on the applicant's ability to make repayments which are of a nominal weekly or monthly amount. Participating partners include Newlands, British Heart Foundation, CHAS and Sue Ryder. The scheme continued during the first lockdown period in 2020. Whilst the above partners were required to close, the Council was able to obtain goods from other suppliers for those applicants whose need was greatest.

### ***Other Matters***

#### Homelessness

- 3.39. At the 12 March 2020 meeting of this committee, Members asked if there was any link between UC and homelessness. At that time, the Council's Housing Options Service had reported that they had not seen any changes in the type and number of homeless presentations since the introduction of UC. It should be noted that the cause of homelessness is not limited to evictions; breakdowns in relationships, fleeing domestic abuse, or evicting those without protection, such as lodgers, can also result in homelessness. However, the impact of covid-19 has prevented any meaningful assessment of this.
- 3.40. The Government passed legislation in March 2020 to prevent bailiff enforced evictions (except in limited circumstances: illegal occupation, false statement, anti-social behaviour, perpetrators of domestic abuse in the social sector, where a property is unoccupied following death of a tenant and serious rent arrears greater than 6 months' rent). This suspension of proceedings will remain in effect until at

least 31 March 2021. In addition, until at least 31 March, Landlords are required to give 6-month notice period to tenants before starting possession proceedings; again, except in the most serious circumstances.

- 3.41. The Housing Options Service report that the number of approaches they have had because of Section 21 evictions (evictions from the private rented sector) has reduced. Figure 1 illustrates the reduction in the number of such presentations from 2020 compared to the last quarter of 2019.

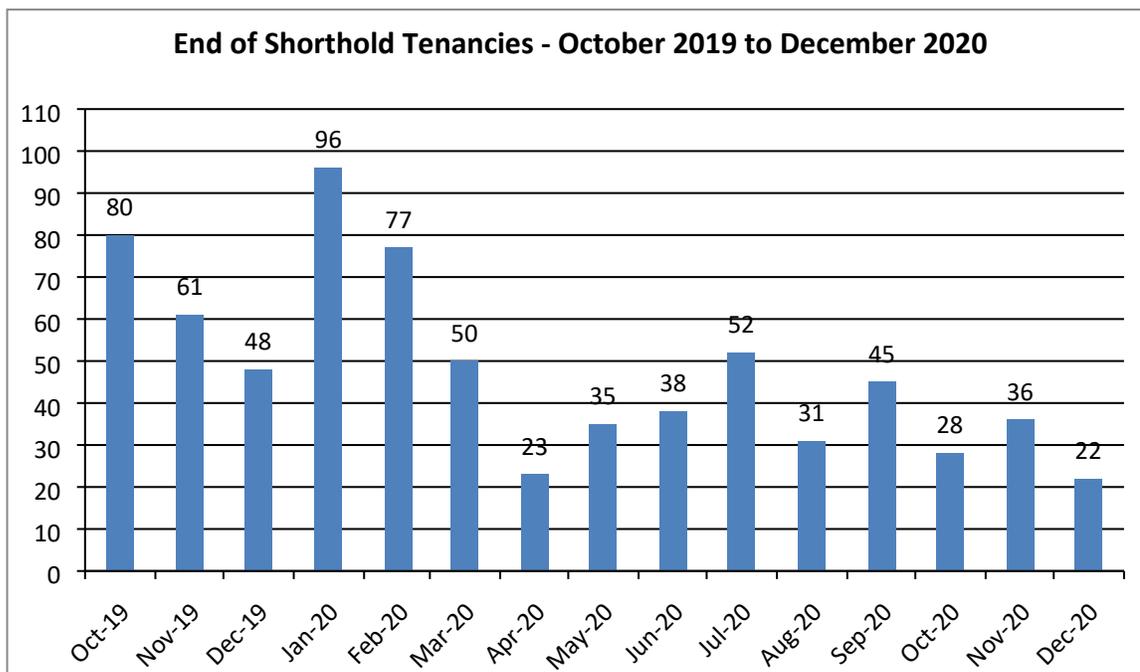


Fig.1

- 3.42. In February, 2021, a new mediation scheme was introduced nationally to support landlords and renters who face court procedures and potential eviction. As part of the new court arrangements, tenants will have access to free legal advice from the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme on the Review day (the day the court considers the case sets a hearing date). If both parties agree and the case is considered suitable, the case will be referred for the free mediation service.
- 3.43. The Government believes that mediation between the landlord and tenant can be quicker, less expensive, and more flexible than a court process; and it leaves landlords and tenants in charge of the outcome, allowing them to resolve a range of issues in ways that would not be possible in a formal hearing.
- 3.44. If an agreement is not reached through mediation, then the hearing will still take place on the date specified. Agreeing to mediation does not make the court possession process any longer.

#### 4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1. The working age housing benefit caseload will continue to reduce so that by September 2024 (the latest Government projection) all working-age claimants will have migrated to UC – with the possible exception of those living in supported accommodation. Administration of Housing Benefit for pension-age claimants will continue. The reduction in caseload has impacted, and will continue to impact, on both the level of resource required to administer housing benefit, and the amount of administration funding paid by Government.
- 4.2. The number of CTR claims increased significantly during 2020 as a consequence of the impact of the pandemic on household incomes; requiring additional resource to process and maintain existing claims. The need for this resource will reduce as the economy recovers and reliance on UC by low-income families reduces. It should be noted that the increase in CTR claims does not correlate directly to the increase in UC claims. Households with a reduction in income, perhaps because they are furloughed, may become eligible for CTR but are not required to claim UC, and conversely, a household maybe required to claim UC but are not eligible for CTR.
- 4.3. To date, the working-age Housing Benefit caseload has reduced from around 30,000, when UC was first introduced, to 16,000, although the majority of this reduction occurred over 2018/19 and 2019/20, with numbers only forecast to drop in total by around 2,000 during 20/21. Housing Benefit administration has likewise reduced over this period. The Council received £2,070,035 of administration funding in 2017/18, and had fallen to £1,612,423 received for 2020/21; but is only due to fall slightly to £1,593,296 for 2021/22. This includes funding for pension-age claimants.
- 4.4. The full, longer-term implications for staffing are not yet known; as these become clearer and better understood, consultation will take place with trade unions and affected staff. Staffing reductions to date have been managed through vacancy control.
- 4.5. In respect of unsubsidised benefit for supported housing, there is a risk of a resulting increasing budget pressure, although limited at the moment. This should be kept under review during 2021/22.

## **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

- 5.1. The reduction in Housing Benefit administration requirement has been met through vacancy control; and will continue to be the case until such time as all working-age claimants have been migrated to UC. The extension of the timeline for the roll-out of UC to September 2024 is likely to provide sufficient time to fully manage the reduction in staffing requirement through vacancy control; even more so if the roll out is delayed further due to the impact of the pandemic. The Trade Unions will be consulted on any proposed changes to staffing should vacancy control prove insufficient.

## **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

- 6.1. The primary legislation enabling the introduction of Universal Credit is contained in the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

6.2. The Council can provide financial support for certain housing costs. The legislation enabling the payment of Discretionary Housing Payments by the Council is contained in the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001.

**7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

**7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

None

**7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

None

**7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

None

**7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

There are no Human Rights issues for the Council arising from the introduction of Universal Credit as this is a Government scheme.

**7.5 TRADE UNION**

The Revenues and Benefits Service made changes to the staffing structure in 2019; including changes made within Benefits administration reflect the impact of Universal Credit on current and expected future workloads. This process complied with Bradford Council's policies and procedures on Trade Union consultation and workforce change. The trade unions will continue to be kept up to date.

**7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

None

**7.7 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS  
(for reports to Area Committees only)**

N/A

**7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING**

None

**7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT**

N/A

**8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

None

**9. OPTIONS**

N/A

**10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the progress being made in the roll-out of Universal Credit in the District

## **11. APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1: Benefit Uptake by Parliamentary Constituency
- Appendix 2: Help To Claim Service – Universal Credit 2020-2021

## **12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- CO&SC Report, Council Tax Collection, 7 January 2020
- CO&SC Report, Universal Credit, 12 March 2020
- CO&SC Report, Universal Credit, 14 February 2019
- Economic and fiscal outlook – March 2020, Office for Budget Responsibility, March 11 2020. ISBN 978-1-5286-1631-7
- Constituency Data: Universal Credit rollout, House of Commons Library, 15 December 2020. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/constituency-data-universal-credit-roll-out/>
- National Audit Office Report, Universal Credit: getting to first payment. 10 July 2020. HC376
- HOC Work and Pensions Committee Report. Universal Credit: the wait for a first payment. 19 October 2020. HOC204
- HOC Work and Pensions Committee Report. Universal Credit: the wait for a first payment, Government Response. 12 January 2021. HOC1117

## Benefit Uptake by Parliamentary Constituency

The latest publicly available figures from DWP relate to the progress of the roll-out of UC, and other benefit uptake by household, as at August 2020. This information is provided for interest only; the differences between constituencies are not meaningful in any way.

DWP data indicates that at least 50% of legacy benefit claimants now claim UC. Table 1 shows claimant count by Parliamentary Constituency as at August 2020. It provides a breakdown of the remaining uptake of legacy benefits in comparison uptake of the individual UC element equivalent.

**Table 1: Households by type of support received**

		<b>Total</b>	<b>Housing Costs</b>	<b>Children - Tax Credits</b>	<b>Incapacity</b>	<b>Jobseekers</b>
<b>Bradford East</b>	UC	13342	6627	5328	1240	7640
	Legacy	12673	4295	8492	3324	484
	%UC	51%	61%	39%	27%	94%
<b>Bradford South</b>	UC	10,529	5410	4393	1016	5508
	Legacy	9883	3728	6185	3028	426
	%UC	52%	59%	42%	25%	93%
<b>Bradford West</b>	UC	13421	6221	4613	1148	8444
	Legacy	13266	3877	8862	3446	523
	%UC	50%	62%	34%	25%	94%
<b>Keighley</b>	UC	6407	3255	2458	643	3329
	Legacy	6317	2108	3785	1973	304
	%UC	50%	61%	39%	25%	92%
<b>Shipley</b>	UC	5317	2683	1969	475	2701
	Legacy	4453	1823	2492	1643	256
	%UC	54%	60%	44%	22%	91%

\*Note: components may not sum to totals due to disclosure control in the source data. Data on People on UC are published between two and four months ahead of Households on UC

### **Help To Claim Service – Universal Credit 2020-2021**

In late March 20, Citizen's Advice National Help to Claim service's response to the breaking Corona Virus pandemic was to almost immediately transfer the entire local services of HtC to the national telephone advice. Since then, Bradford's Citizens Advice Help to Claim Universal Credit team has been working from home answering the national Help to Claim telephone line.

The Universal Credit team based in Bradford and Keighley originally had 4 staff based at either at council office at Britannia House, Keighley Town Hall or Westfield House and one dedicated telephone advice worker based at Bradford CA.

Prior to the first national lock down, advisers on the Citizens Advice national line had the ability to refer clients to their local HtC service via a dedicated task list which was usually dealt with by the telephone worker(s) of the local office. This task list was particularly helpful if the client involved needed digital access to claim UC and so could be directed to the nearest on site adviser at DWP or Council offices. This referral system was suspended and to date remains suspended. The role of the telephone adviser from the beginning of the project was to advise and support the client, who contacted the service through telephone or webchat to first payment of UC (or assist with a challenge if appropriate to the first UC decision).

The DWP response to the pandemic was to accept telephone claims not only from people who did not have the digital know how or confidence to make and sustain a digital UC claim but also, for obvious reasons, to accept claims from people who did not have access to the internet. According to official statistics there were 1.2 million new claims made for UC in the first 3 weeks after lockdown, which hugely increased the demand for Help to Claim advice. All the UC team members reported that as soon as they put the phone down on one call, another would come through immediately after.

Advisers had to learn and advise on a number of new schemes such as the Corona Virus Job Retention Scheme (furlough scheme) and the Self Employment Income Support Scheme, and local schemes such as the Small Business Grant funding as well as changes to benefit rules to Statutory Sick Pay, Shielding and other benefits which relate directly to Help to Claim advice.

In July 20 most Jobcentres were supposed to be open to the public. As Bradford was in tier 3 for most of 2020, the local Jobcentres in Bradford and Keighley were only open to the most vulnerable clients. Access to the DWP was via appointment, normally arranged at the door.

One of the issues that came to the fore in the administration of Help to Claim was the difficulty in getting clients advised on the national Help to Claim line directed to the local HtC service for the area. Whilst the intention of every UC worker on the national line as stated above was to assist a client – no matter where they were calling from in the country- to complete their claim for UC as quickly as possible, local knowledge sometimes assists some clients much more quickly and coherently rather than repeated contact with

different staff on the national service line who often do not have knowledge of the local area.

To deal with this, one UC team member was assigned to a spreadsheet which was populated with call backs from Generalist Advisers from Bradford & Airedale Citizens Advice as well as any referrals received via the national line by the administration team from other local Citizens Advice centres. In our experience it was often Eastern European clients who had made more than one claim for UC who needed direct contact with the local Jobcentre to escalate action on their claim. The adviser concerned can and does make repeated appointments with the client to chase up the client's claim with the local DWP office, who in turn contact the national DWP staff to resolve the delay with the delay processing the clients claim and assist them to get paid.

The HtC team interacts with the Generalist advice team in Bradford to provide telephone appointments to advice about making a claim for UC, and from time to time vice versa where the client needs advice beyond the scope of the project, such as in-depth advice on Personal Independent Payments, debt issues etc.

As many will know, any European who has continued residence in the UK before the 31/12/20 will be able to stay in the UK as long as they have applied for settled or pre-settled status before June 2021.

From 1/4/20 to 27/1/21, the team has dealt with 1,978 clients from all over the country- including Bradford- and recorded over 2,500 case notes. Contact has been predominately over the telephone at 1783, the remainder 792 over webchat.

The number of clients who accessed the Help to Claim Service by Jobcentre Area across Keighley and Bradford areas over the same time frame (via the national Help to Claim line) was 1,775; more than three times than the previous year.

I would like to thank the team who have worked so hard and have shown dedication and commitment to the UC all through the last financial year.

Help to Claim Universal Credit Manager  
Bradford & Airedale Citizens Advice & Law Centre

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## **Report of the Strategic Director of Place to the meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 18th March 2021**

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**AA**

### **Subject:**

Progress report on the Prevent strategy in the Bradford District

### **Summary statement:**

This report outlines the approach to delivering the national Prevent strategy in the Bradford district and highlights progress made in the last twelve months against the District Prevent Action Plan

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### **Portfolio:**

Neighbourhoods & Community Safety

### **Overview & Scrutiny Area:**

Corporate

## **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:**

The risk of radicalisation and extremism continues to be highest in the 18 and under age group. All extremist groups have largely moved all their activity online due to Covid. Online schooling and lockdown has meant an increase in online activity for all age groups, but particularly those 18 and under. Those referred to Channel across the West Yorkshire district continue to be highest in the 18 and under age group. This number has reduced somewhat this year due to Covid related school closures. The overwhelming amount of those referred continue to be male, which reflects the national trend. A significant number of Prevent referrals and cases taken up by Channel include those who have long term mental health issues or are diagnosed with ASD. Again, this has been exacerbated by issues related to Covid, including prolonged time at home and online. Our work this past year and our plans for the future, reflect this.

The Council's Prevent programme makes a positive contribution towards the Council's Equality Objectives. In the first objective: Community Relations- ensure that the people of the district get on well together. This is hugely encouraged and supported within the projects that are funded. The 'Empowering Mothers Against Radicalisation' project particularly, brings together different communities via mothers and works to understand their commonalities and build their education about and resilience towards radicalisation and extremism. All the projects celebrate diversity and the work of the Prevent Education Officer gives invaluable support, advice and resources to educational establishments across the district, to build understanding across communities and celebrate diversity.

## 1.SUMMARY

This report outlines the approach to delivering the national Prevent strategy in the Bradford district and highlights the progress made in the last twelve months against the District Prevent Action Plan.

## 2.BACKGROUND

2.1 At the meeting on 12<sup>st</sup> March 2020, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved that:

- *This Committee requests that the independent review of the national Prevent Programme be presented to this Committee in September 2020, as soon as it is available after its publication.*
- *That the outcomes against the projects being delivered as part of the Prevent Strategy for the District be presented to the Committee.*
- *The report should also include the details of the Social Value of the projects being delivered as part of the Prevent Strategy for the District.*

2.2 The Prevent review was suspended for a time and so has yet to be completed. A new reviewer has recently been put in place, William Shawcross and the review process has now resumed. Bradford welcomes the review and will report the findings from the review to this scrutiny committee as soon as it is in a position to do so.

2.3 At the meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2022, the Committee requested that the outcomes against projects being delivered as part of the Prevent Strategy for the District be presented to the Committee and also include the details of the Social Value of the projects being delivered. The attached appendices address these requests. (Appendix 1 and 2)

2.4 The following report is an update on the Prevent work that has been undertaken over the last twelve months, how it meets the threats in our district and the impact that this work has had. It also addresses our plans for future Prevent work for the next twelve months.

## 3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 The Covid pandemic has had a considerable impact on the risk from extremists and radicalisation. The Commission for Countering Extremism published a report on How Hateful Extremists Are Exploiting the Pandemic. (Appendix 3). This looks at how organisations are using the online space to spread hate, conspiracy theories and mistrust between communities. The continually evolving online sphere is the ideal environment to take advantage of people, particularly young people, who are working online more and more due to home schooling. Lockdown has meant that extremist groups have adapted to ensure that their materials and groups have moved to the virtual space and this has increased their risk.

- 3.2 Self-initiated terrorism remains a risk, due to the low sophistication of methods used and the ease at which things can be planned. This is a risk across all types of terrorism. Extreme right wing extremism and terrorism continues to be a growing risk, successfully tapping into uncertainties around Covid and also international events. The development of their tactics to use online platforms and push a 'free speech' narrative and discuss conspiracy theories, enables the extreme far right to deflect from their own extremism and attract a more mainstream audience. Individuals can be very vulnerable to the on-line narrative.
- 3.3 Around 900 people of national security concern have travelled from the UK to engage in the conflict in Syria and Iraq. Of these, approximately 20% have been killed in that conflict, and around 40% have now returned to the UK. The vast majority of those returned are deemed to be of low security concern. It is assessed that many of the most dangerous individuals remain in Syria. The risk around Syrian travel has been somewhat abated this past year, due to difficulties in travel worldwide because of Covid.
- 3.4 As previously mentioned, an Independent Review of the national Prevent programme is due to resume imminently and at time of writing is due to be completed by August 2021. Bradford Prevent welcome the independent scrutiny and have a plan in place for when Bradford is called to give evidence to the Review.

### **3.5 PREVENT IN THE BRADFORD DISTRICT**

#### Bradford Prevent Delivery

3.5.1 Bradford Council and partners have always sought to tailor the Prevent programme to the needs of the District's communities and the ever developing risks they face. We provide grass roots projects to help build resilience and to ensure support is offered to vulnerable people of all ages and backgrounds to meet these risks. We continue to make efforts to engage communities and elected members and to build awareness of and engagement in the Prevent programme across the district.

3.5.2 Bradford Prevent has tailored the Prevent programme to meet the ever growing risk from online extremism across all ideologies. Projects, training and support are very mindful of this ever developing risk, especially during the Covid pandemic.

3.5.3 The programme in Bradford has been made transparent, with local Prevent Delivery Plans being made available to the public. There has also been significant engagement with the local democratic framework via annual reports to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.5.4 Elected members have been positive in attending online Prevent training sessions. This not only allows for elected members to contribute ideas on delivering Prevent but enables them to take a greater community leadership role and adds transparency and accountability to the local agenda. Last year, elected members attended an online session on developing critical thinking and spotting fake news and conspiracy theories.

3.5.5 Community roundtable events were unable to be delivered due to Covid constraints this year but are planned for the year ahead. These events are organised in partnership with the Area Coordinator's Office and include local and voluntary community organisations, faith establishments and local residents. This has proved a successful way to engage at a grass roots level. There are many misconceptions around Prevent and this provides a forum for community members to hear what delivery actually looks like on the ground.

3.5.6 Under the Prevent strategy the local authority and partners develop projects to reduce the risk of people becoming involved in terrorist activity. Funding granted for the 2020/21 period was £339,572.82. The full list of funded projects can be found in Appendix 1. Most projects are community and education based, focusing on the key risks in our district. Some of the key work is listed below:

**Mothers Against Radicalisation:** A six module programme is delivered to educate and support mothers on understanding the digital world and its impact and danger, safeguarding children and young people from online grooming and radicalisation. Mothers will also be equipped with the knowledge of the signs and symptoms of radicalisation and how to challenge and seek support. 50 women of different backgrounds have taken part in the programme this year with excellent feedback and a ripple effect into communities. This is an established group and now has an Ambassador's Group who are instrumental in passing on their learning to communities and working to raise awareness of Prevent related issues.

**Bradford Hate Crime Alliance:** This project was well regarded in a Prevent Peer Review and is centred on supporting individuals at risk of radicalisation through one to one mentoring and support. The project delivers training in schools and community settings to encouraging critical thinking and link individuals to appropriate support.

**Supplementary Schools Against Radicalisation:** Bradford district has over 100 madrassahs with many thousands of our young people attending 5 or 6 days per week. The project supports Imam's/teachers with the skills to coherently challenge the Daesh narrative, essential in building resilience in young people and the confidence/knowledge to seek appropriate support.

**Small Steps:** This project delivers sessions to some of our most marginalised young people in white communities. The sessions are in schools, Pupil Referral Units and to youth groups primarily and address staff and young people. They provide counter narratives and a sustainable response to the growing far right threats we face as a district.

**Bradford Peace Museum-** This session explores how to tell if information online is suspect or distorts the truth, and what to do if you see online material that promotes extremism.

The session equips you with an understanding of the difference between traditional online safety learning, namely around online bullying and personal safety, and how the internet is used to spread extremist messaging. The workshops use methods that make these issues meaningful for young people and provides a safe space to explore them.

**Oddarts-** Blame and Belonging is an interactive forum theatre performance and workshop using professional actors and specialist facilitators to explore key issues around radicalisation. This performance focuses on the adult influencer, female radicalisation and Islamophobia. It explores people inspired by the extreme 'far right' and also Daesh.

3.5.7 Bradford Prevent commissioned a company to do an independent evaluation of three of its long standing projects and they presented their findings to CONTEST in 2020. The feedback was very positive and provided tools to help the projects in the future. CONTEST were reassured of the effectiveness of the projects after the presentation.

3.5.8 From the outset, Bradford Council has prioritised education as one of the key foundation stones in the battle against extremism. The internet and social media specifically, has opened up new ways to promote extremism. Online radicalisation is identified as an area for a priority response. In addition to our funded projects, the Prevent Education Officer has delivered a range of sessions that develop critical thought, understanding of citizenship, supporting tolerance and providing counter narratives to extremist ideologies. These have continued to be delivered online where possible during lockdown.

3.5.9 A key part of the Prevent strategy is the "Channel" safeguarding scheme. The local authority leads a panel of safeguarding professionals including police, social workers, NHS staff, schools and the justice system to identify those at risk of being drawn into terrorism, assess what the risk might be and then develop tailored support for those referred to them. This could range from mentoring to things like confidence building, managing stress or drug and alcohol programmes. Participation in Channel is voluntary. Of the 697 individuals nationally who received Channel support, there is still a relatively even balance in the types of extremism sited. Due to the small numbers of participants and the voluntary nature of Channel, it is not possible to give local detail on Channel referrals. The possibility of being identified may discourage some people from participation.

3.5.10 To support understanding of safeguarding processes and to help increase confidence in staff to recognise, respond and, where appropriate, to refer concerns around extremism, training is available to staff through the 'Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent' (WRAP). Using actual UK case studies of extreme right-wing and Daesh extremism, the course explores factors which may contribute to an individual's susceptibility to a terrorist ideology. Feedback strongly indicate that WRAP is an easy to understand and non-alarmist method of raising awareness of Prevent. To date, over 20,000 staff in the District have received WRAP training. Training staff and Train the Trainer models continued during the lockdown period.

3.5.11 The Prevent team across the Police and Council have developed a network of 'Prevent Champions' who will lead on the safeguarding function and be kept informed of current patterns of extremism. To date the network is functioning in Bradford Police, across schools and has been introduced within CBMDC.

3.5.12 Guidance has been provided for places of worship to support them in minimising safeguarding risks and keeping congregations safe. This includes advice on what to do if contacted by a far right group, how to respond to hate crime and where to access community safety support. Training and guidance was also provided for local authority Reception staff following a visit to local authority buildings by Britain First. Following this, Reception staff were educated about the group and similar groups and given advice about what to do in the event of a future visit. This was welcomed by the staff.

3.5.13 The Prevent team have secured funding to deliver a comprehensive package of Prevent support work in the next financial year totalling £312 132. The package specifically relates to the key risk areas that we face locally and nationally. It includes projects from those organisations funded last year and an additional project, Votes For Schools. VFS are a highly regarded organisation who encourage debate and discussion of key issues in schools, locally and nationally.

#### **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 There are no direct costs attributable to Bradford Council in relation to the engagement of the Prevent Coordination function.
- 4.2 A central government grant of £339,572.82 was made to Bradford Council in 2020/21 to fund Prevent work in the District. Of this £193 622.82 is supporting relevant posts and their on-costs, including a Local Authority Prevent Co-ordinator, Prevent Engagement Officer, Prevent Education Officer and Administrative support for the delivery of Prevent work. The remainder of the funding supports delivery of projects which contribute to delivering key Prevent objectives in the District. Bradford has secured funding to deliver 5 projects in 2020/21 at a total cost of £145 950.
- 4.3 Partners across health, education, probation and the Police have dedicated resources to ensuring that safeguarding processes are in place and where appropriate, that education services seek to steer people away from extremism and towards a more cohesive society

#### **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

- 5.1 Governance - Local delivery of the strategy is overseen through the Bradford CONTEST governance mechanism. The structure involves partnership at all levels with a range of agencies needed to ensure that we successfully deliver CONTEST in Bradford and the Prevent Strategy within this. Partners should be commended for the commitment and resources they have dedicated to making this structure an effective one.
- 5.2 Bradford CONTEST arrangements sit within the context of a wider, West Yorkshire CONTEST. This meets quarterly to share information and best practise.
- 5.3 Two strands of the CONTEST Strategy, Protect and Prepare, deal with emergency planning, civil contingencies and business continuity. Separate plans are in place for the delivery of this work.

5.4 Links with CONTEST governance and the Council's Safer Communities Partnership have been strengthened with an annual report being delivered.

## **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

6.1 The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 puts the Prevent programme on a statutory footing and makes delivering the Channel scheme a legal requirement. Specifically, the Act:

- Creates a new duty on certain bodies to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The duty will apply to bodies including local authorities, the police, prisons, providers of probation services, schools, colleges, and universities.
- Allows the Secretary of State to issue guidance to those bodies on how the duty should be fulfilled.
- Gives the Secretary of State power to direct a body to take certain action, which would be used to enforce compliance where the Secretary of State is satisfied that the body has failed to discharge the duty.

6.2 The Channel scheme being statutory has:

- required local authorities to ensure a multi-agency panel exists and chair the panel;
- required the panel to develop a support plan for accepted cases and signpost to other support where cases are not accepted;
- ensured consent is sought prior to support being provided;
- placed a duty to cooperate on panel partners;
- required partners to pay due regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- and allowed the Secretary of State to indemnify intervention providers that provide ideological/ theological support for the Channel programme.

6.3 The Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019 enables local authorities, in addition to the police, to refer an individual at risk of being drawn into terrorism for discussion at a Channel panel. At the moment, this power is only available to the police. To achieve this change, the Act amends sections 36 and 38 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no sustainability implications apparent within the context of the report.

### **7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

There are no Greenhouse Gas implications apparent within the context of the report.

### **7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

7.31 The Prevent Strategy for Bradford District is central to reducing the threat of

terrorism and extremism through a partnership structure engaging a wide range of agencies including West Yorkshire Police

7.3.2 Prevent sits within the context of the District's Community Safety Plan and reports annually to the District's Safer Communities Partnership.

## **7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

7.5.1 Terrorism has an impact on human rights, in particular the rights to life, freedom, respect and expression. Terrorist acts can destabilise Governments, undermine civil society, jeopardise peace and security, threaten social and economic development, and can affect the strength and resilience of our communities.

7.5.2 The Prevent Strategy provides a means for developing our partnership arrangements and ensuring we build resilience in the community and put in place effective counter terrorism measures.

## **7.6 TRADE UNION**

There are no trade union implications apparent in the context of the report.

## **7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

The nature of patterns of extremism in the District mean that over time risk will vary across the district, whether this is extreme right wing, Islamist or other. This will impact on the levels of engagement required to mitigate any emergence of extremism and can change. Prevent work, however, does take place widely across the district, for example, through education programmes in schools.

## **7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING**

There are no implications apparent within the context of this report.

## **7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT**

There are no implications apparent within the context of this report.

## **8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

None

## **9. OPTIONS**

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the delivery of Prevent Work across Bradford district and make any recommendations for further consideration

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee acknowledge the progress on work undertaken in implementing the Prevent agenda in Bradford and its approach to supporting vulnerable people.

## **11. APPENDICES**

- 11.1 Appendix one – Prevent Projects delivered in 2020-21
- 11.2 Appendix two- Roles and responsibilities of the Bradford Prevent team
- 11.3 Appendix three – Commission For Countering Extremism- ‘How Hateful Extremists Are Exploiting The Pandemic.’

## **12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 12th March 2020

**Bradford Prevent Projects 2020/21**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Key Deliverables</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>Empowering Minds</b>	<b>Empowering Mothers Against Radicalisation</b>	The project will empower mothers to stand against Radicalisation and Grooming. Support mothers to understand the digital world its impact and dangers on inquisitive minds. Safeguard children and young people on line from Radicalisation and Grooming. Equip mothers with the knowledge of signs and symptoms of Radicalisation and on line grooming, address and implant how to challenge and address this.	6 courses will be delivered that each last six weeks	The project will equip mothers with the knowledge of the signs and symptoms of Radicalisation and online grooming, address and implant how to challenge and address this.
<b>Bradford Hate Crime Alliance</b>	<b>Community Support Project</b>	The Project has been developed to support young people to steer away from extremist ideas, both on-line and through street culture. It is a community-led project to help parents and young people to stay safe from extremist influence. The project will empower young people to explore alternative methods of raising grievances, objections and protest within the rule of law and not rely on those individuals or groups peddling a dangerous and violent agenda. • The Purpose of the project is to help young people to gain the confidence and ability they need to develop within legal means the right of free expression, advocacy and representation skills needed to participate in the democratic and political arenas of our society. - Support channel processes providing additional intervention support to channel cases and individuals who don't meet the channel threshold.	75 individual sessions for parents, professionals and schools. 20 individual 1:1 mentoring sessions according to need.	The project will encourage critical thinking and support individuals with conflicted thoughts to consider their views in light of the counter narratives. The one to one mentoring will allow the building of trust and confidence of vulnerable individuals.
<b>QRTS</b>	<b>Supplementary Schools Against Radicalisation</b>	An anti-radicalisation and extremism training programme with madrassa teachers and students that builds on the link between Madrassah and Secondary school. The work ensures a consistent approach to the counter narrative and increases understanding of	50 x sessions for madrasa students, 10 workshops for staff, 10 sessions for parents, 5 assemblies	This project encourages critical thinking when religious texts and traditions are used and to check authentic sources and interpretations and will use theological examples to dispel extremist narratives

		radicalisation by increasing the knowledge and awareness of the causes and signs of radicalisation and the appropriate support and actions to take.		
<b>Oddarts</b>	<b>Blame and Belonging</b>	<p>Blame and Belonging is an interactive forum theatre performance and workshop using professional actors and specialist facilitators to explore key issues around radicalisation.</p> <p>This performance focuses on the adult influencer, female radicalisation and Islamophobia. It explores people inspired by the extreme 'far right' and also Daesh.</p>	10 days, 3x sessions a day	This project encourages an understanding of the processes and meaning of radicalisation. It also encourages an understanding of the vulnerabilities, triggers and warning signs associated with radicalisation. The workshops and discussion lead to improved critical thinking and communication skills and support how to hold challenging conversations about hate and extremism. They create a safe space to explore hate and radicalisation, which reduces hate and the risk of radicalisation and also increase community cohesion.
<b>Bradford Peace Museum</b>	<b>From Fake News to Extremism in a Digital Age</b>	This session explores how to tell if information online is suspect or distorts the truth, and what to do if you see online material that promotes extremism. The session equips you with an understanding of the difference between traditional online safety learning, namely around online bullying and personal safety, and how the internet is used to spread extremist messaging. The workshops use methods that make these issues meaningful for young people and provides a safe space to explore them.	20 days 5 sessions a day 30 students a session	Real life examples are used from apps, games and websites that are in common use by young people to explore how narratives are spread through imaging, messaging and manipulation. It allows participants to recognise extremist activity, how to be resilient to false and manipulative activity, and how to take action safely exposed to it.
<b>Small Steps</b>	<b>Creating Positive Change - Combined Awareness and Counter Narrative to Far Right</b>	This project delivers sessions to some of our most marginalised young people in white communities. The sessions are in schools, PRUs and to youth groups primarily and address staff and young people. They provide counter narratives and a sustainable response to the growing far right threats we face as a district.	These sessions were booked for the 2019/20 period and were carried over from then.	The programme will reduce the risk of far right lone actors and build resilience to engagement with far right groups and social media narratives. It will allow participants to disaggregate current political discourse from a far right hate narrative. Grass roots community and youth workers will be equipped to challenge far right approaches on an ongoing basis.

Social Value of the projects

Project	Social value
<p align="center"><b>Bradford Hate Crime Alliance</b></p>	<p>BHCA works with those who are vulnerable for many reasons. They may have poor mental health, learning disabilities, be on the fringes of criminal activity or have dysfunctional lives due to family situations. The time that BHCA spends mentoring those in need and the speed and holistic nature of the referrals, means that those referred feel heard and are much more open about their issues than previously. The help and support provided can lead to improvements in mental health, education and employment opportunities. Participants are less likely to rely on drugs/ alcohol/ criminal activity to fill a void, they make better choices online, they show more acceptance of those who are different, leading to more community cohesion. The support that BHCA provide is to people who usually 'slip through the net.' People are often more likely to engage with them because they are an alternative agency to the Police and they spend time building trust.</p> <p><i>'I remember from when he were first referred, you know, that he were researching all kinds of stuff on computer...and over months they've got that rapport going and now I'm thinking of closing, it's closed from Channel now, this young lad but Bradford Hate Crime Alliance are still working with him and he's doing better with his education now, managed to get his mental health sorted out and his family's really happy with his progress and that's all down to CSP workers and the team and like I said they feed everything back to me as the case manager so, you know, they're a valuable resource and they've turned this young lad's – they've – I wouldn't say turned him round completely 'cos, but he's a lot better than what he was and that's all due to them doing that interaction with him over a long period of time' (CTU Officer)</i></p>
<p align="center"><b>Empowering Mothers Against Radicalisation</b></p>	<p>EMAR brings groups of mothers from across the district, from all different backgrounds and cultures. The women are educated about some of the key</p>

issues around radicalisation and extremism and wider issues in society, such as internet safety. They are encouraged to get involved in discussions and ask questions of each other and share experiences. There are opportunities throughout the course for the women to speak publically and share their views with key district stakeholders. The social value of this is huge as it enhances the role of women in society and their potential as leaders. Several of those involved have taken this experience and got involved in community projects afterwards.

***'I come from a community that tends to glorify men as leaders and women are kind of like oh you're just doing your role as a mother and you know, what – basically they're not really given the chance and opportunity to really to shine and thrive. So I personally thought this was quite a unique project that flipped the script a little bit' (Stakeholder)***

The discussions that the mothers have, lead to an increase in community involvement as their opinions were being sought by the LA and the Police about issues. This helped increase community pride and interest in those involved.

***'I'll go back to the Holme Wood estate, when I walked in they were, they were hostile towards the Police. Really, really awful. They'd already had these pre-conceived ideas in their head about where, about what I was going to do. And, again, over time, over questioning and over their sort of, I would say, their mis-information, we have reached a really, really good sort of working relationship all of us together. And there's a lot of trust and confidence now because we can, we can have these conversations' (Stakeholder)***

The projects brings together mums from all backgrounds and this has a positive impact on community cohesion. The mums share their own stories and experiences and this helped to build trust, dispel myths and cement new friendships.

	<p><i>...one of the other mothers from one of the other groups is an Asian lady and erm, when we got meeting, when we put, we've got put together she talks just like me. She's so open, so honest but the only difference –apart from skin colour we're like twin sisters. A mirror image. When they both turned up to do an interview they had more or less similar clothes on. And the conversations I've had with her around religion and stuff and I'm like, Wow. But you're forbidden to talk. You're forbidden to ask normally'</i> <i>(EMAR attendee and Ambassador)</i></p> <p>The mums also improved their IT knowledge and this was invaluable for them in terms of understanding what their children were looking at online and in helping to keep them safe in the future.</p> <p><i>'We had an IT session and they were talking about snap-chat and Instagram and I don't have that – I am out of date. It was so important to do this workshop so I know what our children are using – what are the privacy settings I should be putting on. We know what to look out for'</i> <i>(EMAR attendee) '...we had someone come in and did like computers and I really liked that because it was something I could do to protect my child. That's what really empowering 'cos it's something I can do. I figure we can take control over that situation'</i> <i>(EMAR attendee)</i></p>
<p><b>QRTS Merit</b></p>	<p>Being able to speak to young people and parents, as well as staff has been very socially beneficial as it means the education given is across all groups is consistent.</p> <p><i>'I was curious and wanted to ensure content was safe and neutral. I was then pleased it was able to explain issues to my child in a way I could not (due to my own lack of knowledge)' [Parent]</i></p> <p>The project includes work that promotes community cohesion and respecting all faiths in the community.</p>

	<p><b><i>...if someone is a different race or religion that doesn't mean you can be disrespectful or mean to them.' [Beneficiary]</i></b></p> <p>The workshops develop the skills needed to challenge inappropriate views of all kinds and help those undertaking them to be able to address these in an informed and evidence based way.</p> <p><b><i>'Merely by raising their awareness and confidence it has pleased me that my kids are able to challenge inappropriate views and back it up with knowledge' [Parent]</i></b></p> <p>The content and sessions helps to demystify the Prevent strategy and so helps to improve trust. It also gives excellent guidance to build skills that will help build tolerance and community cohesion in the future, via stopping people believing fake news and conspiracy theories. This could have social value in so many areas as fake news permeates so many areas of our lives.</p> <p><b><i>'The delivery of the content is authentic and tailored to the communities it is delivered in, it helps to de-mystify the toxic perception of Prevent. The project is locally grown and run, keyed into local community needs and directly relevant to faith which directly opposes recruitment on the same basis. The project supports a variety of other work on building critical thinking, developing trusted networks of support and building resilience.'</i></b> <b><i>[Council PREVENT team]</i></b></p>
<p><b>Bradford Peace Museum</b></p>	<p>The social skills learned in these sessions are enormously important in our digital age, particularly as more and more people are spending extended time online due to Covid. These sessions equip attendees with the skills to recognise propaganda and manipulation online and know how to deal with it. They reduce peoples' belief in fake news and conspiracies, so the distrust between communities and different groups which is increased by the 'us and them narrative' online, will reduce. Declining belief in conspiracy theories may also increase trust in authority. This could all have</p>

	a positive impact on hate crime, community safety and community cohesion.
<b>Oddarts</b>	The Oddarts project performs a drama for the audience and this has enormous social value. Seeing a story acted out and then being able to discuss the story and the impact on those involved, increases empathy for those different communities. This can only be a good thing in terms of improving people's attitude to each other and to different communities. The discussion afterwards encourages critical thinking and enables young people to have the opportunity to discuss difficult topics in a safe and non-judgemental way. Doing this increases the likelihood that the audience will try and see the whole picture and be more likely to see the side of all those involved. This, in turn, has the potential to improve community cohesion and community safety.
<b>Small Steps</b>	By targeting some of our most marginalised young people in difficult to reach areas, this project gives them a voice and an opportunity to share their views and concerns. This, in turn, gives them a sense that people are listening and their views are important. The social value of this could be in building up a sense of pride and a desire to make a change in their lives. Working with young people and allowing them to share their experiences, helps them to make sense of some of their past choices and how groups like the far right manipulate those in difficulty. It could also inspire them to make a better choice in the future and be less likely to get involved with some of the other areas that are sometimes linked with the far right, such as online abuse, petty crime and aggression.

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## Appendix B

### Roles and responsibilities in Prevent in Bradford

Role	Responsibilities
<b>Prevent Coordinator</b>	<p>The Coordinator oversees the Prevent strategy and the Prevent programme in the Bradford district. They are instrumental in creating and maintaining partnerships across the district and engaging with sectors and communities to better understand their concerns and the risks related to extremism and radicalisation.</p> <p>The Coordinator provides support and guidance, as well delivering training and programmes across the district. They work with Elected Members, Council Officers at all levels of the organisation, senior representatives of other agencies, private sector and community organisations, to raise awareness of the various Prevent related risks in our society and how we can build counter narratives to these. Training is offered in how to have difficult conversations, the dangers of fake news and conspiracy theories and also on how to build critical thinking. Training is also offered on the different emerging extremism/ terrorism risks in our society.</p> <p>Strong partnerships mean that the Coordinator has a strong awareness of the Prevent related risks in our society. They use this knowledge to bid for funding from the Home Office. They ensure that this funding is spent on resources, projects and events that target the main Prevent related risks in our society and build resilience towards extremist narratives. They also ensure that the Prevent team is supporting and facilitating this work and adding to it with their own expertise and knowledge.</p> <p>The Coordinator has developed a Prevent Champions network which is growing steadily and shares good practise and resources across the district.</p>

	<p>The Coordinator is an active member of the Channel Panel and provides advice and support to partners across the district with regard to Prevent safeguarding matters.</p>
<p><b><u>Prevent Education Officer</u></b></p>	<p>The Prevent Education Officer (PEO) is responsible for supporting schools and all education establishments and those that work with young people, in fulfilling their Prevent Duty.</p> <p>They deliver Prevent training to schools, Children’s Homes and Youth Worker staff across the district. They also deliver various training packages to staff and pupils regarding how to have difficult conversations with young people, the importance of critical thinking, the dangers of fake news and conspiracy theories, as well as workshops for students transitioning to secondary school.</p> <p>PEOs are instrumental in sourcing, designing and distributing resources for PSHE to build resilience to hate crime, extremist narratives and radicalisation. They provide advice and support to school staff to ensure that young people are provided with the opportunities and resources to explore ideas and understand the risks in our society and how they can protect themselves online and in everyday life. They also provide advice on the Prevent Duty in schools and how schools can best meet this in their policies, procedures and curriculum</p> <p>The PEO provides advice and training to schools and educational establishments regarding safeguarding the young people in their care and have an excellent collaborative relationship with schools, many of whom are part of our Prevent Champions network. This relationship means that they have an excellent understanding of the Prevent related issues in our schools and are able to advise on projects and support from Home Office funding that will meet these issues.</p>

<p><b>Prevent Engagement Officer</b></p>	<p>The Prevent Engagement Officer is instrumental in working with partners across the district to understand and gauge community sentiment. They work with local communities, voluntary and faith organisations to strengthen their understanding of Hate Crime and Prevent and safeguarding work and build trust and confidence in local structures designed to challenge hate and extremism.</p> <p>The Engagement Officer organises local roundtable events to engage with communities across the district. These events help the Prevent team to understand local sentiment and work with communities to raise awareness of risk and share the work that is going on across the district to combat this.</p> <p>The Engagement Officer also works with mosques and madrassas across the district, helping in the delivery of Prevent training and raising awareness of the hate crime and Prevent related risks in our society.</p> <p>Our strong community links mean that Home Office funded projects are delivered across the district. The Engagement Officer is instrumental in ensuring that these projects target the appropriate risks and are being delivered well and meeting their objectives.</p> <p>The Engagement Officer engages local councillors, making them aware of activity within their ward and they identifying appropriate community training programmes which will help build resilience and increase the capacity for communities to engage with others of a different background.</p>
<p><b>Business Support Officer (part time)</b></p>	<p>The Business Support Officer supports the Prevent team with their data and administration tasks to ensure that the District Prevent Plan is delivered smoothly. They provide support with data collection, budgets, administration and statistics to ensure that training, projects and workshops are delivered effectively and in a timely and professional manner.</p>



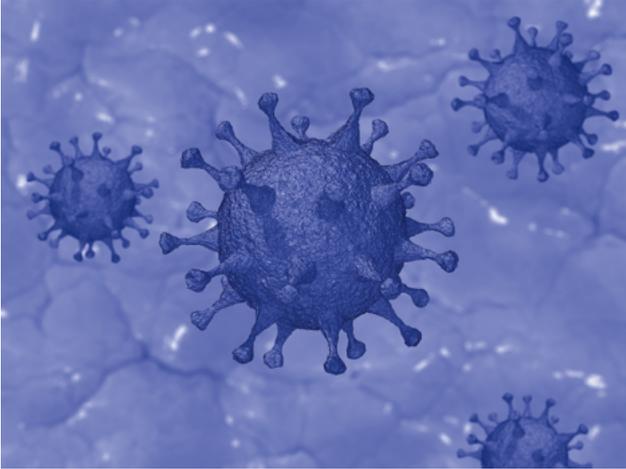
# COVID-19

## How hateful extremists are exploiting the pandemic

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# Introduction



Since the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Commission for Countering Extremism has heard increasing reports of extremists exploiting the crisis to sow division and undermine the social fabric of our country.

We have heard reports of British Far Right activists and Neo-Nazi groups promoting anti-minority narratives by encouraging users to deliberately infect groups, including Jewish communities<sup>1</sup> and of Islamists propagating anti-democratic and anti-Western narratives, claiming that COVID-19 is divine punishment from Allah on the West for their alleged 'degeneracy'.<sup>2</sup> Islamists have also claimed

that COVID-19 is punishment on China for their treatment of Uighurs Muslims.<sup>3</sup> Other conspiracy theories suggest the virus is part of a Jewish plot<sup>4</sup> or that 5G is to blame.<sup>5</sup> The latter has led to attacks on 5G masts and telecoms engineers.<sup>6</sup> We are seeing many of these same narratives reoccur across a wide range of different ideologies.

Fake news about minority communities has circulated on social media in an attempt to whip up hatred. These include false claims that mosques have remained open during lockdown.<sup>7</sup> Evidence has also shown that 'Far Right politicians and news agencies [...] capitalis[ed] on the virus to push forward their anti-immigrant and populist message'.<sup>8</sup> Content such as this normalises Far Right attitudes and helps to reinforce intolerant and hateful views towards ethnic, racial or religious communities.

Practitioners have told us how some Islamist activists may be exploiting legitimate concerns regarding securitisation to deliberately drive a wedge between communities and the British state.<sup>9</sup> Others told us about the difficulties of delivering vital counter-extremism work during lockdown.<sup>10</sup> They told us how assessing

- <sup>1</sup> Nikita Malik. 2020. 'Self-Isolation Might Stop Coronavirus, but It Will Speed the Spread of Extremism', *Foreign Policy*, [accessed: 8 June 2020], <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/26/self-isolation-might-stop-coronavirus-but-spread-extremism/>>
- <sup>2</sup> Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. 2020. 'Snapshot: How Extremist Groups are Responding to Covid-19', p.3, [accessed: 11 June 2020], <<https://institute.global/sites/default/files/2020-05/Snapshot%203%20COVID19%20V02.pdf>>
- <sup>3</sup> Nur Aziemah Azman. 2020. 'Divine Retribution: The Islamic State's COVID-19 Propaganda', *The Diplomat*, [accessed: 8 June 2020], <<https://thediplomat.com/2020/03/divine-retribution-the-islamic-states-covid-19-propaganda/>>
- <sup>4</sup> Community Security Trust. 2020. 'Coronavirus and the plague of Antisemitism', p.5, [accessed: 08 June 2020], <<https://cst.org.uk/data/file/d/9/Coronavirus%20and%20the%20plague%20of%20antisemitism.1586276450.pdf>>
- <sup>5</sup> Aidan Milan. 2020. 'Coronavirus UK: Why do people think 5G is responsible for the Covid-19 pandemic?', *Metro*, [accessed: 8 June 2020], <<https://metro.co.uk/2020/04/02/coronavirus-uk-people-think-5g-responsible-covid-19-pandemic-12500019/>>
- <sup>6</sup> Alex Hern. 2020. '5G conspiracy theories fuel attacks on telecoms workers', *The Guardian*, [accessed: 11 June 2020], <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/may/07/5g-conspiracy-theories-attacks-telecoms-covid>>
- <sup>7</sup> See: Community Security Trust. 2020. 'Coronavirus and the plague of Antisemitism' p.9, [accessed: 1 June 2020], <<https://cst.org.uk/data/file/d/9/Coronavirus%20and%20the%20plague%20of%20antisemitism.1586276450.pdf>> and Lizzie Dearden. 2020. 'Coronavirus: Government issues disinformation warning as extremists and conspiracy theorists exploit crisis', *The Independent*, [accessed: 11 June 2020], <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-conspiracy-theory-warning-disinformation-uk-government-a9429101.html>>
- <sup>8</sup> Ofra Klein. 2020. 'How is the Far-Right Capitalising on COVID-19', Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, [accessed: 24 June 2020], <<http://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2020/04/10/how-is-the-far-right-capitalizing-covid-19/>>
- <sup>9</sup> CCE Meeting with practitioners 1 June 2020
- <sup>10</sup> CCE Meeting with practitioners 3 June 2020



the scale and impact of extremist content and developing counter-extremism interventions has become challenging now that extremists operate predominantly online.

Many organisations are doing important work to understand the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and extremism. By bringing existing information together and commissioning original research, these notes seek to provide an overview of some of the attitudes, beliefs and extremist activities that are taking place across England and Wales. It represents the first of a series of quarterly notes which will collate and analyse this information to help practitioners, civil society and policy makers understand the current and emerging picture around hateful extremism and work towards developing a more effective response.

## Methodology

The independent Commission for Countering Extremism was established in March 2018 to support society to challenge all forms of extremism and provide impartial advice to the Government on new policies. In October 2019 we published the report, [Challenging Hateful Extremism](#).

We are presenting the data according to the three key pillars of hateful extremism identified in that report:

- Beliefs and attitudes
- Behaviours and activity
- Harms

### Our summary of hateful extremism is:

- Behaviours that can incite and amplify hate, or engage in persistent hatred, or equivocate about and make the moral case for violence;
- And that draw on hateful, hostile or supremacist beliefs directed at an out-group who are perceived as a threat to the wellbeing, survival or success of an in-group;
- And that cause, or are likely to cause harm to individuals, communities or wider society.

The data collection period for this note is 1 March to 5 June 2020. The data used in this note is publicly available, but we have also included information directly sourced from practitioners who are working in local communities across the country. The data collected in this note is not an exhaustive list of extremist activity but seeks to provide an overview. There is limited data available to assess the scale and harm of extremist activity and we continue to encourage the Government to develop a strategy that seeks to address this.

As this note is the first in the series, we welcome feedback on what might be helpful to include in subsequent versions.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to this we hope to include original research to identify hateful extremist narratives in our next note.

<sup>11</sup> Please email [info@extremismcommission.independent.gov.uk](mailto:info@extremismcommission.independent.gov.uk) to provide feedback

# Summary

**37%**

of respondents had heard about the 5G conspiracy theory and almost a third of (those) people found it credible<sup>12</sup>

It was reported that

circa **50**

masts were targeted for arson and vandalism in the UK in April<sup>16</sup>

Far Right actors have sought to encourage other online users to deliberately infect Jews and Muslims<sup>17</sup>

There was a

**21%**

increase in hate crime toward East Asian and South East Asian individuals<sup>13</sup>



A fake post accusing Muslims of breaking lockdown rules was shared

**2,700** times<sup>14</sup>

**90.6%**

of posts containing misinformation were not acted on by social media companies after volunteers flagged them<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Patrik Hermansson. 2020. 'Trust no one: Understanding the drivers of conspiracy theory belief', HOPE not hate, p.5, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/conspiracy-report-2020-04-v1-copy.pdf>>

<sup>13</sup> Jamie Grierson. 2020. 'Anti-Asian hate crimes up 21% in UK during coronavirus crisis', *The Guardian*, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/13/anti-asian-hate-crimes-up-21-in-uk-during-coronavirus-crisis>>

<sup>14</sup> Reuters. 2020. 'False claim: British mosque remains open during coronavirus lockdown', (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-leeds-mosque/false-claim-british-mosque-remains-open-during-coronavirus-lockdown-idUSKBN2113AX>>

<sup>15</sup> Center for Countering Digital Hate. 2020. '#Will to Act: How social media giants have failed to live up to their claims on the Coronavirus "infodemic"', p.9, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <[https://252f2edd-1c8b-49f5-9bb2-cb57bb47e4ba.filesusr.com/ugd/t4d9b9\\_17e9f74e84414524bbe9a5b45afdf77e.pdf](https://252f2edd-1c8b-49f5-9bb2-cb57bb47e4ba.filesusr.com/ugd/t4d9b9_17e9f74e84414524bbe9a5b45afdf77e.pdf)>

<sup>16</sup> Isobel Asher Hamilton. 2020. 'Here's what we know about the bizarre coronavirus 5G conspiracy theory that is leading people to set cellphone masts on fire', *Business Insider*, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://www.businessinsider.com/coronavirus-conspiracy-5g-masts-fire-2020-4?r=US&IR=T#some-50-masts-have-now-been-targeted-by-arson-attacks-despite-appeals-from-the-government-and-mobile-companies-14>>

<sup>17</sup> Rakib Ehsan. 2020. 'Weaponising COVID-19: Far-Right Antisemitism in the United Kingdom and United States', Henry Jackson Society, p.13, (accessed: 11 June 2020), <<https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/HJS-COVID-19-Far-Right-Report.pdf>>



# Findings and recommendations

## Findings

- During the COVID-19 pandemic we have seen an increased visibility of conspiracy theories ranging from anti-vaccine, anti-establishment to anti-minority and antisemitic. They are not specific to any one ideology, but are used by the Far Right, Far Left and Islamists to further their own ideological aims.
- Hateful extremists have used the pandemic to engage in disinformation and fake news about minority groups which have been used by sympathisers to incite hatred, justify violence and to divide communities.
- The scale of extremist content online is vast. De-platforming Far Right actors has pushed many onto fringe platforms such as Telegram, VK and GAB.
- The short and long term impacts of the pandemic could create conditions conducive for extremism. Extremists will seek to capitalise on the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 to cause further long term instability, fear and division in Britain.

## Recommendations

Government needs to include clear plans to counter extremism in their response to this and future crises. It should also publish a new counter-extremism strategy urgently to ensure that it can strategically respond to the activities of extremists in our country. This strategy should include:

- An assessment of how extremism manifests locally, the harm it causes, the scale of support for extremist narratives and how best to pre-empt extremist activity. This should also include a mechanism to provide bespoke support to local authorities most affected.
- An assessment of who is most susceptible to extremist narratives and a plan of what interventions they will put in place to engage and support those people.
- Plans to work with researchers and practitioners to build a better understanding of 'what works' in relation to counter extremism online and offline.
- A commitment to ensure hateful extremism falls within the remit of the new online harms regulator and that existing laws on inciting hatred should be enforceable online.
- Plans to build an understanding of how conspiracy theories contribute to extremism. Including how they are utilised by extremists, what the scale, impact and harm is, and how to counter them. This should include a commitment to develop a system to classify dangerous conspiracy theories based on the harm they cause.
- Separately, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government must drive forward a COVID-19 cohesion strategy to help bring different communities together to prevent extremist narratives from having significant reach and influence.



# Beliefs and attitudes

We have looked at several polls and identified three themes we consider to be relevant to hateful extremism:

- conspiracy theories
- blaming the 'other' and out-groups
- pro-social attitudes and resilience

The evidence gathered in this section seeks to highlight changes in attitudes during this period and concerning trends.

## Conspiracy theories

Conspiracy theories have been a key tactic used by extremists to recruit and divide communities. Conspiracy theories are defined as 'attempts to explain the ultimate causes of significant social and political events and circumstances with claims of secret plots by two or more powerful actors'.<sup>18</sup> They are difficult to challenge as their proponents commonly respond to attempts to invalidate them by claiming that they are being censored. Moreover, social media companies can serve to fuel conspiracy theories as platforms can be slow to takedown content and some algorithms can push users towards more similar extremist content.<sup>19</sup>

During the COVID-19 pandemic we have seen an increased visibility of conspiracy theories ranging from anti-vaccine, anti-establishment to anti-minority and antisemitic. They are not specific to any one ideology, but are used by the Far Right, Far Left and Islamists to further their own ideological aims.

- Whilst many conspiracy theories may be considered harmless, some have resulted in very real-world consequences. The conspiracy theory that claimed 'faster 5G internet [was] either causing or accelerating the spread of the coronavirus' gained significant traction.<sup>20</sup> We know that extremists discussed this theory on fringe social media platforms such as Telegram. It was reported that circa 50 5G masts were targeted for arson and vandalism in the UK in April.<sup>21</sup>
- Although now largely debunked, 5G conspiracy theories permeated rapidly into the mainstream. Studies showed that 37% of respondents had heard about the 5G conspiracy theory and almost a third of (those) people found it credible.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Karen M. Douglas, Joseph E. Uscinski, Robbie M. Sutton, Aleksandra Chichocka, Turkyay Nefes, Chee Siang Ang and Ferzani Deravi. 2019. 'Understanding Conspiracy Theories', *Advances in Political Psychology*, Vol. 40:S1, p.4

<sup>19</sup> Adam Smith. 2020. 'Facebook knew its algorithm made people turn against each other but stopped research', *The Independent*, (accessed: 10 June 2020), <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/facebook-algorithm-bias-right-wing-feed-a9536396.html>>

<sup>20</sup> Isobel Asher Hamilton. 2020. 'Here's what we know about the bizarre coronavirus 5G conspiracy theory that is leading people to set cellphone masts on fire', *Business Insider*, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://www.businessinsider.com/coronavirus-conspiracy-5g-masts-fire-2020-4?r=US&IR=T>>

<sup>21</sup> Isobel Asher Hamilton. 2020. 'Here's what we know about the bizarre coronavirus 5G conspiracy theory that is leading people to set cellphone masts on fire', *Business Insider*, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://www.businessinsider.com/coronavirus-conspiracy-5g-masts-fire-2020-4?r=US&IR=T#some-50-masts-have-now-been-targeted-by-arson-attacks-despite-appeals-from-the-government-and-mobile-companies-14>>

<sup>22</sup> Patrik Hermansson. 2020. 'Trust no one: Understanding the drivers of conspiracy theory belief', HOPE not hate, p.5, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/conspiracy-report-2020-04-v1-copy.pdf>>



- People’s beliefs about the causes of the pandemic are influencing their behaviour. Another analysis found that those who believed that COVID-19 was created in a lab were over twice as likely to have met up with friends during lockdown, and to believe ‘too much fuss is being made about coronavirus’.<sup>23</sup>
- A study from the University of Oxford found that people who held coronavirus conspiracy beliefs were less likely to comply with social distancing guidelines or take up future vaccines. They tested conspiracy theories which claimed that the virus is a bioweapon developed by China to destroy the West; that Muslims are spreading the virus as an attack on Western values and that Bill Gates created the virus to reduce the world population.<sup>24</sup>
- The scale of online extremist content and engagement with such material is deeply concerning. Research by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) found hundreds of thousands of Far Right posts around COVID-19 and millions of engagements with known disinformation sites.<sup>25</sup> They found that there was a marked increase in conversations within Far Right circles about ‘elites’ such as Bill Gates, George Soros, the Rothschilds and Jeff Bezos and false information about their role in the creation of the virus.<sup>26</sup>
- Despite the scale of conspiracy theories online, social media companies are not doing enough to tackle this problem. The Center for Countering Digital Hate looked at misinformation online and showed that only 9% of the posts flagged to companies were met with meaningful action.<sup>27</sup> This study demonstrates that despite efforts from social media companies, harmful content is still spreading on their platforms.



## Blaming the ‘other’ or out-groups

As we showed in our report and in line with social movement theory,<sup>28</sup> extremists promote hostile and supremacist beliefs towards a group of people who are perceived as a threat to the wellbeing, survival or success of a defined ‘in-group’. Who is seen as the ‘out-group’ depends on the ideological worldview of extremists, but it often includes

<sup>23</sup> Bobby Duffy, Daniel Allington, Kelly Beaver, Christoph Meyer et al. 2020. ‘Life under lockdown: Coronavirus in the UK’, The Policy Institute, King’s College London, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute/assets/coronavirus-in-the-uk.pdf>>

<sup>24</sup> University of Oxford. 2020. ‘Conspiracy beliefs reduce the following of government coronavirus advice’, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<http://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2020-05-22-conspiracy-beliefs-reduces-following-government-coronavirus-guidance>>

<sup>25</sup> Study focused predominantly on the US

<sup>26</sup> Institute for Strategic Dialogue. 2020. ‘COVID-19 Disinformation Briefing No.3’, (accessed 8 June 2020), <<https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/covid-19-disinformation-briefing-no-3/>>

<sup>27</sup> Center for Countering Digital Hate. 2020. ‘#Will to Act: How social media giants have failed to live up to their claims on the Coronavirus ‘infodemic’’, p.3, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <[https://252f2edd-1c8b-49f5-9bb2-cb57bb47e4ba.filesusr.com/ugd/f4d9b9\\_17e9f74e84414524bbe9a5b45afd77e.pdf](https://252f2edd-1c8b-49f5-9bb2-cb57bb47e4ba.filesusr.com/ugd/f4d9b9_17e9f74e84414524bbe9a5b45afd77e.pdf)>

<sup>28</sup> J.M. Berger. 2018. Extremism, London: MIT Press



people with a protected characteristic, or people who possess different racial, ethnic, religious or cultural backgrounds which are then perceived to be 'alien' and a threat.<sup>29</sup>

Hateful extremists often look for someone to blame in times of crisis and we have heard how disinformation and fake news targeted at different 'out-groups' and minorities can be used to incite hatred, justify violence and divide communities.

### Anti-Western

- Islamist extremists have used the COVID-19 pandemic to pursue their own ideological agendas and objectives. ISIS celebrated the impact of COVID-19 on Western militaries in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>30</sup> Analysis of their weekly newsletter showed that ISIS see the pandemic as beneficial to their terrorist aims as defence and security resources in Western countries are reallocated to combat the pandemic.<sup>31</sup>

### Antisemitism

- Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, five dangerous categories of conspiracy theories aimed at blaming the Jewish community emerged. These

are that the virus is fake and part of a Jewish plot to mislead the public, that it's real and was deliberately created for malevolent purposes, that Jews are the primary spreaders of the virus, that Jewish people are dying in disproportionately higher numbers and posts that incite others to deliberately spread the virus to Jews.<sup>32</sup> Research has shown how similar antisemitic narratives can gain traction within the UK and the US.<sup>33</sup>

- Research has shown how individuals such as David Icke play a significant role in spreading antisemitic conspiracy theories linked to COVID-19. One of Icke's most popular videos claimed that 'the Rothschilds' are key players in a global plot to use the disease as a pretence to impose a totalitarian world government. This video was viewed over 5.9 million times.<sup>34</sup> Although Icke was successfully de-platformed from Youtube and Facebook<sup>35</sup>, the scale and reach of his antisemitic conspiracy theories remains extremely concerning.

### Anti-Muslim hatred

- In an attempt to whip up anti-Muslim hatred, fake news and false narratives showing British Muslims flouting social distancing rules were promoted. In one

<sup>29</sup> J.M. Berger. 2018. *Extremism*, London: MIT Press

<sup>30</sup> Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. 2020. 'Snapshot: How Extremist Groups are Responding to Covid-19', p.3, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://institute.global/sites/default/files/2020-05/Snapshot%203%20COVID19%20V02.pdf>>

<sup>31</sup> Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. 2020. 'Snapshot: How Extremist Groups are Responding to Covid-19', p.3, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://institute.global/sites/default/files/2020-05/Snapshot%203%20COVID19%20V02.pdf>>

<sup>32</sup> Community Security Trust. 2020. 'Coronavirus and the plague of Antisemitism', (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://cst.org.uk/data/file/d/9/Coronavirus%20and%20the%20plague%20of%20antisemitism.1586276450.pdf>>

<sup>33</sup> Rakib Ehsan. 2020. 'Weaponising COVID-19: Far-Right Antisemitism in the United Kingdom and United States', Henry Jackson Society, (accessed: 12 June 2020), <<https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/HJS-COVID-19-Far-Right-Report.pdf>>

<sup>34</sup> Center for Countering Digital Hate. 2020. '#DeplatformIcke: How Big Tech powers and profits from David Icke's lies and hate, and why it must stop', p.4, (accessed: 23 June 2020), <[https://252f2edd-1c8b-49f5-9bb2-cb57bb47e4ba.filesusr.com/ugd/f4d9b9\\_db8ff469f6914534ac02309bb488f948.pdf](https://252f2edd-1c8b-49f5-9bb2-cb57bb47e4ba.filesusr.com/ugd/f4d9b9_db8ff469f6914534ac02309bb488f948.pdf)>

<sup>35</sup> Hope Not hate. 2020. 'Coronavirus & the Far Right: Weekly Round Up', (accessed: 23 June 2020), <<https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2020/05/07/covid-19-the-far-right-weekly-round-up-6/>>

particular case a picture taken outside of a Leeds mosque appeared to show Muslims breaking the rules. Although quickly refuted by West Yorkshire police, and shown to be false, it had already gained traction on social media.<sup>36</sup> Reports showed that it was shared 2,700 times on Facebook and was subsequently removed.<sup>37</sup>

- Whilst there is no evidence that Muslims have been less assiduous about social distancing than other communities, research also showed that 20% of respondents had read or seen articles relating to 'British Muslims keeping mosques open in contravention of the Government's lockdown rules'.<sup>38</sup>
- An account purporting to be Far Right actor Stephen Yaxley-Lennon shared posts that branded infected Muslims as 'corona bombs' to his followers on Telegram, using #GermJihad.<sup>39</sup>

### Anti-Chinese hatred

- There has also been a worrying rise in hate crime and hate incidents towards Chinese people. L1ght, an AI-based start-up that detects and filters toxic online content, reported that there was a 900% increase in hashtags identified as hateful towards Chinese people on Twitter.<sup>40</sup>

### Pro-social and resilience

Pro-social attitudes can reduce the impact of extremist narratives. In contrast, research indicates that a 'lack of trust in the system is generally higher amongst those who are most prone to believing conspiracy theories'.<sup>41</sup>

At the start of lockdown, many polls suggested that pro-social attitudes were higher than normal, indicating that people felt that the UK Government's handling of the pandemic was better than other countries.

- On 14 April Kekst reported that people in the UK were more likely to have gained confidence in their government, key institutions and businesses compared with people in the US, Germany, or Sweden.<sup>42</sup>
- In April King's College London found that there was near-universal support (89%) for the current measures, and 68% strongly agreed with them.<sup>43</sup>

Whilst support for the Government at the beginning of the outbreak remained strong, this did not remain the case for long.

At the peak infection rate on 27 March, YouGov reported that 72% of the public believed the Government was handling the

<sup>36</sup> Professor Imran Awan and Roxana Khan-Williams. 2020. 'Coronavirus, fear and how Islamophobia Spreads on social media', p.5, [accessed: 8 June 2020], <<https://antimuslimhatredworkinggrouphome.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/research-briefing-report-7-1.pdf>>

<sup>37</sup> Reuters. 2020. 'False claim: British mosque remains open during coronavirus lockdown', [accessed: 8 June 2020], <<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-leeds-mosque/false-claim-british-mosque-remains-open-during-coronavirus-lockdown-idUSKBN21I3AX>>

<sup>38</sup> Patrik Hermansson. 2020. 'Trust no one: Understanding the drivers of conspiracy theory belief', HOPE not hate, p.16, [accessed: 8 June 2020] <<https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/conspiracy-report-2020-04-v1-copy.pdf>>

<sup>39</sup> Center for Countering Digital Hate. 2020. 'British far-right adopts Indian hate campaign blaming Muslims for coronavirus', [accessed: 23 June 2020], <<https://www.counterhate.co.uk/post/british-far-right-adopts-indian-hate-campaign-blaming-muslims-for-coronavirus>>

<sup>40</sup> L1ght. 2020. 'Rising Levels of Hate Speech & Online Toxicity During This Time of Crisis', [accessed: 8 June 2020], <[https://l1ght.com/Toxicity\\_during\\_coronavirus\\_Report-L1ght.pdf?fbclid=IwAR12yPh-Gli1Ur1qwwZoCuu4nP2zG5dLxs590Exti5UXYORQCWp3w\\_ko1MQ](https://l1ght.com/Toxicity_during_coronavirus_Report-L1ght.pdf?fbclid=IwAR12yPh-Gli1Ur1qwwZoCuu4nP2zG5dLxs590Exti5UXYORQCWp3w_ko1MQ)>

<sup>41</sup> Patrik Hermansson. 2020. 'Trust no one: Understanding the drivers of conspiracy theory belief', HOPE not hate, p.5, [accessed: 8 June 2020], <<https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/conspiracy-report-2020-04-v1-copy.pdf>>

<sup>42</sup> Kekst. 2020. 'COVID-19 Opinion Tracker', [accessed 8 June 2020], <<https://www.kekstcnc.com/media/2568/kekst-report-16apr2020.pdf>>

<sup>43</sup> Bobby Duffy, Daniel Allington, Kelly Beaver, Christoph Meyer et al. 2020. 'Life under lockdown: Coronavirus in the UK', The Policy Institute, King's College London, [accessed: 8 June 2020], <<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute/assets/coronavirus-in-the-uk.pdf>>



issue of COVID-19 'very' or 'somewhat' well. Nine weeks later, on 29 May, this dropped to 41% indicating that the public is rapidly losing trust in the Government.<sup>44</sup>

A reduction of trust in the Government and state institutions can be exploited by extremists to spread their hateful and divisive narratives.

Despite pessimism towards the Government, research showed that more people believed that Britain will be more united and kinder following the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, than it was before the pandemic.<sup>45</sup>



<sup>44</sup> YouGov. 2020. 'YouGov COVID-19 tracker: government handling', (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/international/articles-reports/2020/03/17/perception-government-handling-covid-19>>

<sup>45</sup> Office for National Statistics. 2020. *Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 14 May 2020*, (accessed: 30 June 2020), <<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritain/14may2020#understanding-the-impact-on-society>>

# Behaviours and activities

We have seen a range of concerning behaviours across the ideological spectrum of extremism.

## Far Right

- The British National Socialist Movement,<sup>46</sup> encouraged other Telegram users who had COVID-19 to deliberately infect Jews and Muslims.<sup>47</sup>
- ISD found that the COVID-19 pandemic is playing into 'accelerationism' on the extreme right. Accelerationism promotes the idea that democracy is a failure and that Far Right groups should accelerate its end through inciting social conflict and violence.<sup>48</sup>
- Social Media platform TikTok banned Far Right actors Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (Tommy Robinson) and Britain First for hate speech violations in April, however their combined videos had already amassed almost a million views.<sup>49</sup> De-platforming has pushed many Far Right actors and groups onto fringe platforms such as Telegram, VK and GAB.<sup>50</sup>

An account purporting to be well known Far Right actor, Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, has amassed circa 36,000 followers on Telegram.<sup>51</sup>

- A Telegram account purporting to be Jayda Fransen, former deputy leader of Britain First, was seen promoting conspiracy theories about Bill Gates and China on her Telegram channel to circa 2,000 followers.



<sup>46</sup> The British National Socialist Movement is a group that espouses Neo-Nazi views, including comments about Hitler. See: Rakib Ehsan. 2020. 'Weaponising COVID-19: Far-Right Antisemitism in the United Kingdom and United States', Henry Jackson Society, p.9, (accessed: 11 June 2020), <<https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/HJS-COVID-19-Far-Right-Report.pdf>>

<sup>47</sup> Rakib Ehsan. 2020. 'Weaponising COVID-19: Far-Right Antisemitism in the United Kingdom and United States', Henry Jackson Society, p.13, (accessed: 11 June 2020), <<https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/HJS-COVID-19-Far-Right-Report.pdf>>

<sup>48</sup> Institute for Strategic Dialogue. 2020. 'COVID-19 Disinformation Briefing No.1', p.2, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-Briefing-Institute-for-Strategic-Dialogue-27th-March-2020.pdf>>

<sup>49</sup> Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. 2020. 'How extremist groups are responding to COVID-19', p.8, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://institute.global/sites/default/files/2020-05/Snapshot%203%20COVID19%20V02.pdf>>

<sup>50</sup> Telegram describes itself as 'a messaging app with a focus on speed and security'. VK is a Russian online social media and social networking service with offices based in Saint Petersburg. VK is available in multiple languages but it is predominantly used by Russian-speakers. GAB describes itself as, 'A social network that champions free speech, individual liberty and the free flow of information online'. See: Ryan Greer. 2020. 'Weighing the Value and Risks of Deplatforming' *Global Network on Extremism & Terrorism*, (accessed: 11 June 2020), <[https://gnet-research.org/2020/05/11/weighing-the-value-and-risks-of-deplatforming/?utm\\_source=Tech+Against+Terrorism&utm\\_campaign=1235ee09e6-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_03\\_24\\_07\\_51\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_cb464fdb7d-1235ee09e6-141624359](https://gnet-research.org/2020/05/11/weighing-the-value-and-risks-of-deplatforming/?utm_source=Tech+Against+Terrorism&utm_campaign=1235ee09e6-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_03_24_07_51_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_cb464fdb7d-1235ee09e6-141624359)>

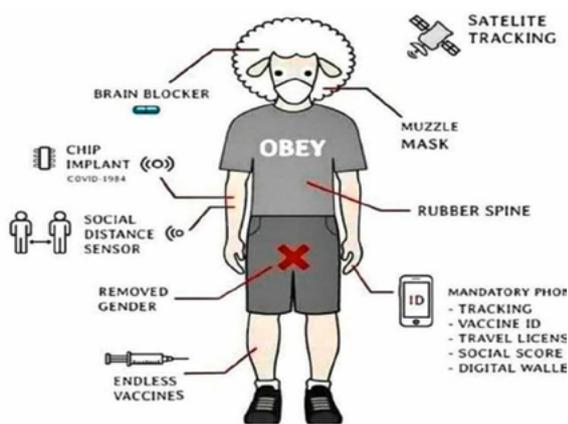
<sup>51</sup> As of 8 June 2020



- In the UK, users of multiple Far Right Telegram channels, attempted to organise a lockdown protest. One announced a ‘March against a vaccine and lockdown’ in May.<sup>52</sup> On Saturday 16 May we saw a small protest against the lockdown in London, similar to those seen in the US.<sup>53</sup> People attended for many different reasons, however media reports seemed to suggest protestors were generally distrustful of Government and the media.

## Islamist

- In the UK, Islamist extremist group Hizb ut-Tahrir<sup>54</sup> have used the COVID-19 pandemic to further their anti-democratic narratives by calling for the establishment of the Khilafah (Caliphate) as ‘both a political and theological necessity for which no sacrifice is too small’.<sup>55</sup>



- Practitioners told us how some Islamist activists may be exploiting legitimate concerns regarding securitisation to further drive a wedge between communities and the Government. This has taken the form of conspiracy theories on social media accusing the Government of attempting to use future vaccines to deliberately harm minority communities and that COVID-19 is a conspiracy used to control the population.<sup>56</sup>
- Some memes are used by groups to further their ideological aims. The image to the left uses the phrase ‘Sheeple’ which is a popular phrase amongst Far Right actors and was featured on the US website Infowars. It is a contraction of ‘sheep’ and ‘people’. In this context it refers to people who are easily led and docile. The image itself references many conspiracy theories such as that the Government and/or an elite is planning to use COVID-19 to justify planting tracking chips in people. Although popular with the Far Right, it has also circulated amongst other communities.

Going forward we expect to see an increase in anti-Government conspiracy theories, particularly pushing the narrative of the deliberate securitisation of particular communities. We have already seen these themes emerge across the ideological spectrum.

<sup>52</sup> Hope Not hate. 2020. ‘Coronavirus & the Far Right: Weekly Round Up’, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2020/04/24/covid-19-the-far-right-weekly-round-up-4/>>

<sup>53</sup> Lizzie Dearden. 2020. ‘Coronavirus: Inside the UK’s biggest anti-lockdown protest’, *The Independent*, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-lockdown-protests-uk-london-hyde-park-5g-conspiracy-theories-a9518506.html>>; BBC. 2020. ‘Coronavirus lockdown protest: What’s behind the US demonstrations’, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-52359100>>

<sup>54</sup> An organisation that seeks to establish a theocratic Islamic state

<sup>55</sup> Editor. 2020. ‘COVID-19: Is this the end of Liberalism’, Hizb UT-Tahrir, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<http://www.hizb.org.uk/viewpoint/covid-19-is-this-the-end-of-liberalism/>>

<sup>56</sup> CCE meeting with practitioners, 1 June 2020



# Harms

Our report identified six categories of harm from extremism which is having an impact across the whole of society. These include:

- social division and intolerance
- crime, violence and harassment
- mental health and wellbeing
- censorship and restriction of freedom
- delegitimising authority/undermining democracy
- economic harms

Despite this there still exists insufficient research on these harms more generally and specifically as a result of the pandemic. During the first few months of the pandemic however, practitioners shared concerns about young people and early indications of hate crime statistics can serve as a useful proxy.

## Vulnerability

We have drawn particular attention to young people as vulnerable to extremism. However, not enough is known about who specifically is susceptible to extremist narratives and more should be done to assess who may require more support.

In our report, we highlighted that a crucial element to building resilience to extremism in young people is the provision of youth services. We highlighted the negative effect of funding cuts and the related increases in the risk of young people becoming involved in anti-social activity and potentially extremism.<sup>57</sup>

- The degradation of social support may result in younger people becoming more vulnerable to extremist narratives, and it is also making it less likely that risk factors would be noticed, hence Prevent and Channel<sup>58</sup> referrals are down by 50%.<sup>59</sup>
- Chief Superintendent Nik Adams, national coordinator for Prevent, also warned that the impact of COVID-19 and social isolation may 'exacerbate grievances that make people more vulnerable to radicalisation.' He further argued that 'extremists and radicalisers [...] will look to exploit any opportunity to lead those people into harm, often using topical issues as hooks to lure them in'.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Commission for Countering Extremism. 2019. *Challenging Hateful Extremism*, p.106, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/874101/200320\\_Challenging\\_Hateful\\_Extremism.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874101/200320_Challenging_Hateful_Extremism.pdf)>

<sup>58</sup> The aim of the Prevent strategy is to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Channel forms part of the Prevent strategy. The process is a multi-agency approach to identify and provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism. See: Home Office. 2011. Prevent Strategy, p.23, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf)>

<sup>59</sup> Vikram Dodd. 2020. 'Fears of rise in UK terrorist recruits as anti-radicalisation referrals collapse', *The Guardian*, (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/apr/22/fears-of-rise-in-uk-terrorism-recruits-after-anti-radicalisation-referrals-collapse-coronavirus>>

<sup>60</sup> Counter Terrorism Police. 2020. 'CTP warn about greater risk of radicalisation during COVID-19 lockdown', (accessed: 8 June 2020), <<https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/ctp-look-to-bolster-prevent-referrals-during-lockdown/>>



## Hate Crime

It was reported that hate crime directed at South and East Asian communities has increased by 21% during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>61</sup> Official figures have not yet been released and it is not clear how the Government plans to tackle this.

The CPS reported on a number of successful prosecutions across England relating to hate crime and COVID-19 specifically.<sup>62</sup> CPS West Midlands Magistrates' Court unit successfully prosecuted 78 COVID-19-related cases from March to May including incidents of emergency workers and key workers being assaulted, threatened, coughed at and spat on by people claiming to have COVID-19.<sup>63</sup>



<sup>61</sup> Jamie Grierson. 2020. 'Anti-Asian hate crimes up 21% in UK during coronavirus crisis', *The Guardian*, [accessed: 8 June 2020], <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/13/anti-asian-hate-crimes-up-21-in-uk-during-coronavirus-crisis>>

<sup>62</sup> Crown Prosecution Service. 2020. 'CPS Hate Crime Newsletter, Issue 25', [accessed 11 June 2020], <<https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/cps-hate-crime-newsletter-issue-25>><https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/cps-hate-crime-newsletter-issue-25>

<sup>63</sup> Crown Prosecution Service. 2020. 'CPS West Midlands: Successful COVID-19 prosecutions – March to May 2020', [accessed: 11 June 2020], <<https://www.cps.gov.uk/west-midlands/news/west-midlands-successful-covid-19-prosecutions-march-may-2020>><https://www.cps.gov.uk/west-midlands/news/west-midlands-successful-covid-19-prosecutions-march-may-2020>



# Conclusion and recommendations

We have brought together data to present an emerging picture of extremism within England and Wales at the start and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. It is not simply a British problem, as U.N. secretary general António Guterres stated, 'We are seeing stigma, hate speech, and white supremacists and other extremists seeking to exploit the situation'.<sup>64</sup> Extremists across the globe will always exploit crises to spread their hateful narratives and sow division within communities. It is crucial therefore that the Government always include clear plans to counter and prevent extremism as part of their response to this and future crises.

Whilst lockdown rules are gradually eased, it will take some time before life returns to normal. The short- and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic could create conditions conducive for extremism. Extremists will seek to capitalise on this to cause further long-term instability, fear and division in Britain. The socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will present significant extremism risks, both in scale and impact and it is vital that the Government refocuses its efforts to counter extremism. To mitigate against extremist activity, the Government should publish a new counter-extremism strategy urgently to ensure it is on the front foot in pre-empting and strategically responding to the activity of extremists in our country.

We judge that the Government should seek to tackle these emerging issues before they escalate and cause further damage to society.

The Commission will continue to gather and publish relevant COVID-19 extremism information to help inform policy makers, public bodies and practitioners.

## Conspiracy theories

We have drawn attention to a variety of conspiracy theories that exist around the COVID-19 pandemic but it is vital that we build an understanding of how conspiracy theories contribute to extremism, and how extremists utilise them. This also includes understanding better the scale, impact and harms of extremist related conspiracy theories. More research on what is successful in countering dangerous conspiracy theories is required.

Policy makers should look to develop a system to classify dangerous conspiracy theories based on the harm they cause. This will help practitioners and social media platforms better identify harmful conspiracy theories before they escalate.

## Vulnerability and harm

We have shown how the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to impact young people in particular. However, not enough is known

<sup>64</sup> United Nations Secretary-General. 2020. 'Secretary-General's remarks to the Security Council on the COVID-19 Pandemic [as delivered]', (accessed: 23 June 2020), <<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-04-09/secretary-generals-remarks-the-security-council-the-covid-19-pandemic-delivered>>



about who is most at risk especially in the long-term. In the new counter-extremism strategy, the Government needs to be clear about who is most at risk from hateful extremist narratives and what interventions they will put in place to engage and support those people.

Government also needs to work with local authority partners to understand better differing extremist trends across the country, the harm they are causing, scale of support for extremist narratives; and how best to pre-empt extremist activity and provide support to local authorities most affected. For example, an understanding of local anti-vaccine sentiment would need to guide future vaccine roll out to ensure that people are not afraid to receive the vaccine.

Government needs to ensure it has the right levers and tools to hold social media companies to account for the content that is posted on their platforms. Platforms need to take firmer steps to remove content and users who post abusive content, taking better account of the victims who are often repeatedly targeted by the same people. A regulator with real power, as suggested by the Online Harms White Paper, could make a significant difference. But their remit must include online hateful extremism and our existing laws on inciting hatred also need to be enforceable online.

## **Counter-extremism interventions**

Lockdown has proved challenging to those delivering counter-extremism interventions.

Those working in research and the counter-extremism sector need to support and work with practitioners to help develop new and effective online counter-extremism interventions. The scale and ease of access to online extremist driven content is proving to be particularly difficult to counter. Policy makers and researchers need to prioritise this work.

Government needs to invest in building a better understanding of ‘what works’ in relation to counter-extremism. This continues to be critical.

## **Strengthening local cohesion**

Extremists seek to foster division within our towns and cities. Delivering events, campaigns and projects based on inclusion, shared values and community cohesion – both online, and where possible offline – are vital to help build resilience to extremism and to prevent extremists from gaining a foothold. These projects are often seen as a nice-to-have, but they are powerful ways to reduce the impact of extremism. Local communities are a key partner in helping to challenge extremism and in promoting an inclusive Britain.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government needs to drive forward a COVID-19 cohesion strategy to help bring different and diverse communities together and to prevent hateful extremist narratives from having significant reach and influence.



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## **Report of the Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on Thursday 18 March 2021**

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**AB**

### **Subject:**

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme 2020/21**

### **Summary statement:**

**This report includes the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2020/21.**

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Cllr Nazam Azam  
Chair – Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee

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Overview and Scrutiny Lead  
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### **Portfolio:**

**Corporate  
Community Safety**

### **Overview & Scrutiny Area:**

**Corporate**

## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report includes the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2020/21, which is attached as appendix 1 to this report.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Council constitution requires all Overview and Scrutiny Committees to produce a work programme.

## **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the responsibility for “the strategies, plans, policies, functions and services directly relevant to the corporate priority about customer services and e-government, that improve the Councils ability to deliver, govern and change, community cohesion and all other corporate matters not falling within the responsibility of any other Overview and Scrutiny Committee.” (Council Constitution, Part 2, 6.2.1).

- 3.2 The remit of this Committee also includes:

- the co-ordination of the discharge of the Overview and Scrutiny role within the Council and in relation to external bodies;
- supporting the Executive through its contribution towards the improvement of the Council’s performance;
- co-ordinating the development of the Overview and Scrutiny role within the Council.

- 3.3 Best practice published by the Centre for Public Scrutiny suggests that “work programming should be a continuous process”. It is important to review work programmes, so that important or urgent issues that arise during the year are able to be scrutinised. Furthermore, at a time of limited resources, it should also be possible to remove areas of work which have become less relevant or timely. For this reason, it is proposed that the Committee’s work programme be regularly reviewed by members of the committee throughout the municipal year.

- 3.4 The work programme as agreed by the Committee will form the basis for the Committee’s work during the year, but will be amended as issues arise during the year.

- 3.5 As agreed by members of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, this Committee will be undertaking detailed Scrutiny Reviews this Municipal Year, relating to Fireworks, Hate Crime and Domestic Violence.

## **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 None.

## **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

5.1 None.

## **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

6.2 None.

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

Community Cohesion and Equalities related issues are part of the work remit for this Committee.

### **7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

None.

### **7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

None.

### **7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

A key priority of work for this Committee related to the Overview and Scrutiny of the strategies, plans, policies, functions and services directly relevant to the priority of Safer and Stronger Communities.

As well as this, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is also the authority's Crime and Disorder Committee under the provisions of Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006.

### **7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

None.

### **7.6 TRADE UNION**

None.

### **7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

Work of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee has ward implications, but this depends on that nature of the topic.

## **7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING**

None.

## **7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT**

None.

## **8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

None.

## **9. OPTIONS**

9.1 The Committee may choose to add to or amend the topics included in the 2020-21 work programme for the committee.

9.2 Members may wish to consider any detailed scrutiny reviews that it may wish to conduct.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 That members consider and comment on the areas of work included in the work programme.

10.2 That members consider any detailed scrutiny reviews that they may wish to conduct.

## **11. APPENDICES**

Appendix One – 2020-21 Work Programme for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Appendix Two – Unscheduled Topics.

## **12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Council Constitution.

2019-20 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

# Democratic Services - Overview and Scrutiny

## Corporate O&S Committee

Scrutiny Lead: Mustansir Butt tel - 43 2574

### Work Programme

Agenda	Description	Report	Comments
<b>Thursday, 9th July 2020 at Remote Virtual Meeting.</b> Report deadline 29/06/2020.			
1) COVID19 issues relating to the areas of work under the remit of this Committee.	Overall co-ordination and response to COVID19 and the governance arrangements.	Joanne Hyde/Stev Hartley/Chris Chapman/Bev Maybury/Sarah Muckle/Ian Day/Anne Lloyd.	
2) Resolution Tracking. Thursday	Monitoring the progress made against the recommendation of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	Mustansir Butt.	From th cancelled meeting on 9 April 2020.
3) Draft 2020-21 Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme.	Disucssion and agreement over the Draft 2020-21 Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee work programme.	Mustansir Butt.	
<b>Thursday, 23rd July 2020 at Remote Virtual Meeting.</b> Chair's briefing 02/07/2020. Report deadline 09/07/2020.			
1) Call-In.	Impower.	Joanne Hyde/Chris Chapman.	
2) 2019-20 Annual Performance Outturn.		David Wamlsley/Phil Witcherley/Laura Copley/Jenny Cryer.	
3) Finance Position Statement for 2019-20.		Chris Chapman/Andrew Cross.	
4) First Quarter Financial Position Statement.		Chris Chapman/Andrew Cross.	
5) Work Planning.	There is a need to regularly review the work programme, in order to prioritise and manage the work.	Mustansir Butt.	
<b>Thursday, 24th September 2020 at Remote Virtual Meeting.</b> Chair's briefing 03/09/2020. Report deadline 10/09/2020.			
1) £2m Personal Protective Equipment Procurement Contract.		Michele Macarten/Ian Westlake.	Constitutional requirement.
2) Equality Objectives.	The final progress on the Equaloty objectives (2016-2020) be presented in September 2020. Also that the Draft Equality Objectives be presented to this Committee, prior to them being considered by the Executive.	Helen Johnston/Philip Witcherley.	Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 23 January 2020.
3) Work Planning.	There is a need to regularly review the work programme, in order to prioritise and manage the work.	Mustansir Butt.	
<b>Wednesday, 14th October 2020 at Remote Virtual Meeting.</b>			
1) Domestic Violence Scrutiny Review.	Revisiting the Terms of Reference.	Mustansir Butt.	
<b>Thursday, 22nd October 2020 at Remote Virtual Meeting.</b> Chair's briefing 01/10/2020. Report deadline 08/10/2020.			
1) £2m procurment contract - New Coroners Court Accomodation.		Imran Khan/Ben Middleton/Christophe Hamard.	Constitutional requirement.

2) Bradford Council Workforce Development Strategy 2015-2021.	Focusing specifically on key outcomes and performance appraisals.	Anne Lloyd.	Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 10 October 2020.
3) Draft Managing Attendance Scrutiny Review Report.	Key findings and recommendations from the Scrutiny Review.	Mustansir Butt.	From the cancelled meeting on Thursday 9 April 2020.
4) Work Programme.	There is a need to regularly review the work programme, in order to prioritise and manage the work.	Mustansir Butt.	

#### Thursday, 12th November 2020 at Remote Virtual Meeting.

1) Hate Crime Scrutiny Review.	Informal information gathering session with the LGBTQ+ community.	Mustansir Butt.	Cancelled from March 2020, due to COVID19.
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#### Thursday, 19th November 2020 at Remote Virtual Meeting.

Chair's briefing 15/10/2020. Report deadline 05/11/2020.

1) Second Quarter Financial Position Statement.		Chris Chapman/Andrew Cross.	
2) Draft Procurement Strategy.		Ian Westlake.	From the cancelled meeting on 9 April 2020.
3) Stronger Communities Strategy.	Progress against the Stronger Communities Strategy Delivery Plan be presented in 12 months, specifically focusing on the outcomes and evaluation of projects being delivered as part of the programme.	Ian Day/Mahmood Mohammed.	Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 23 January 2020.
4) Safer Communities Plan Performance.	Performance related report against the Delivery Plan to be presented in 12 months. Quarterly performance data to be electronically circulated to members.	Ian Day/Michael Churley.	Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 23 January 2020.
5) Work Planning.	There is a need to regularly review the work programme, in order to prioritise and manage the work.	Mustansir Butt.	

#### Thursday, 3rd December 2020 at Remote Virtual Meeting.

Chair's briefing 11/11/2020. Report deadline 19/11/2020.

1) Advanced Fuel Centre procurement - £2m Procurement Contract.		Andrew Whittles/Matthew Joanne Hyde/Iain Macbeath/Mark Douglas.	Cosntitutional requirement.
2) This Committee requests that a further report be presented to in three months which specifically focuses on the key outcomes delivered from the Impower Contract.	To be considered at a meeting in December 2020.		Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 23 July 2020.
3) Work Planning.	There is a need to regularly review the work programme, in order to prioritise and manage the work.	Mustansir Butt.	

#### Wednesday, 9th December 2020 at Remote Virtual Meeting.

1) Domestic Violence Scrutiny Review.	Informal information gathering session.	Mustansir Butt.	
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#### Thursday, 7th January 2021 at Remote Virtual Meeting.

Chair's briefing 17/12/2020. Report deadline 18/12/2020.

1) Business Rates.		Martin Stubbs.	
2) Council Tax.		Martin Stubbs.	
4) Industrial Services Group.	Further progress in 12 months, to also include the purchases of Council assets to support ISG.	Ben Middleton/Peter Keeley.	Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 16 January 2020.
5) Work Planning.	There is a need to regularly review the work programme, in order to prioritise and manage the work.	Mustansir Butt.	

**Tuesday, 16th February 2021 at Remote Virtual Meeting.**

Chair's briefing 28/01/2021. Report deadline 04/02/2021.

- 1) West Yorkshire Devolution.

Jason Longhurst/Julian Jackson/Ben Stillman/Angela Taylor/Caroline Allen.

**Thursday, 18th March 2021 at Remote Virtual Meeting.**

Chair's briefing 25/02/2021. Report deadline 04/03/2021.

- 1) Implementtion of Universal Credit across the District.

Implementation of Universal Credit across the District, to also include the support being provided to vulnerable groups.

Martin Stubbs.

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 12 March 2020.

- 2) Prevent Programme for the District.

The independent review of the national Prevent Programme be presented to this Committee in September 2020, as soon as it is available after its publication. The outomes against the projects being delivered as part of the Prevent Strategy for the

Ian Day.

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 12 March 2020.

- 3) Work Planning.

There is a need to regularly review the work programme, in order to prioritise and manage the work.

Mustansir Butt.

**Tuesday, 23rd March 2021 at Remote Virtual Meeting.**

Report deadline 10/03/2021.

- 1) £2m plus contract for our temporary staff contract.
- 2) Hate Crime Scrutiny Review.

Key findings and recommendations.

Ian Westlake/Michelle McCarten.

Constitutional Requirement.

Mustansir Butt.

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny recommendation.

4th March 2021

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# Democratic Services - Overview and Scrutiny

## Scrutiny Committees Forward Plan

### Unscheduled Items

#### Corporate O&S Committee

Agenda item	Item description	Author	Comments	
1	Verbal update from Bradford Councils representative on the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel.	Cllr Richard Dunbar/Cllr Tariq Hussain/Cllr Russell Brown.	Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 13 September 2018.	
2	Draft Digital Strategy.	Parveen Akhtar.	Request from Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee members.	
3	Draft IT Strategy.	Dominic Barnes-Browne/Keith Hayes.	Request from Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee members.	
4	West Yorkshire Combined Services.	Report to focus on the viability of Bradford Council using West Yorkshire Joint Services as an internal provider. The findings from the comprehensive review of West Yorkshire Joint Services be presented to this Committee prior to a final decision being made.	Susan Betteridge/Joanne Hyde.	Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 11 April 2019.
5	Antisocial and illegal use of Fireworks Scrutiny Review.	The Council requests Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to do a wholesale review within the next six months of the use of fireworks in our neighbourhoods. Partners in the review should be the Police, Fire Service, Trading Standards and Licensing.	Mustansir Butt.	Council Resolution from Tuesday 12 September 2019.
6	Hanson School's Financial Position.	Update on the School's Financial position be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.	Marium Haque/Chris Chapman/Andrew Redding.	Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 6 February 2020.
7	District Plan.	Annual Report to be presented in 12 months and to also include actual targets against the District Plan.	Philip Witcherley.	Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 23 January 2020. Following discussions with the Chair and Phil Witcherley - District plan priorities and how we are organising partnerships in the future COVID world.
8	Gambling.	The Cross Departmental and Cross Organisational Plan be presented to this Committee in 6 months. The departments involved in the development of the Plan should include but not be limited to Public Health, Children's Social Care and probation/youth service.	Sarah Muckle/Frances Towers/.	Corporate Overview & Scrutiny recommendation from Thursday 16 January 2020.

## Corporate O&S Committee

Agenda item	Item description	Author	Comments	
9	The Committee requests that a detailed risk assessment report relating to Brexit, focusing on the Council's Plans and extent of any risk to be presented to Corporate Overview & Scrutiny at an early meeting.	Philip Witcherley.	Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 23 July 2020.	
10	Procurement Strategy Implementation.	Ian Westlake.	Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation.	
12	People Can.	Detailed report specifically focusing on the added value of the People Can Programme across the District.	Mahmood Mohammed/Ian Day.	Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 12 March 2020.
13	The Covenant.	Further report on the work undertaken in line with the Council resolution be presented in 12 months. The findings of the Armed Forces Covenant be presented to this Committee within six months.	Helen Johnston.	Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 23 January 2020. To be considered in July 2021.
14	Impower Contract.	Specifically focusing on key outcomes. To be considered in the New Municipal Year.	Joanne Hyde/Mark Douglas/Iain Macbeath/Parveen Akhtar/Chris Chapman.	Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 3 December 2020.
15	Bradford District Anti-Poverty Co-ordination Group/Period Hygiene Poverty.	A more focused report in 12 months relating to how peoples lives are being improved through the work of the Anti-Poverty Coordinating groups. For Period and Hygiene Poverty to also include more detailed information relating to service needs and response	Helen Johnston/Sarah Possingham.	Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Thursday 16 January 2020. Deferred from 8 April 2021 cancelled meeting.