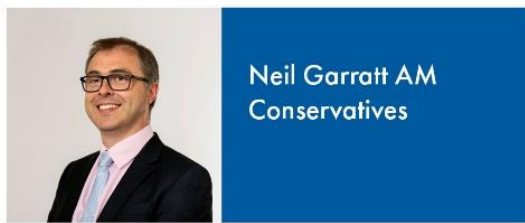


# Counter-terrorism and radicalisation

Police and Crime Committee

**LONDONASSEMBLY**

## Police and Crime Committee



The London Assembly Police and Crime Committee is responsible for examining the work of the Mayor and his Office for Policing and Crime, to make sure that he is delivering on his promises to Londoners. It also investigates other issues relating to policing and crime in the capital, and routinely publishes the findings and recommendations from its investigations.

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## Foreword



**Susan Hall AM**  
**Chair of the Police and Crime Committee**

It is testimony to the huge efforts made by people across London that we have not experienced a terrorist attack since two people were seriously injured in Streatham in February 2020. However, the threat of terrorism remains, and London bears the highest risk in England.

To explore the ever-changing threats from terrorism, the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee launched an investigation last year into counter-terrorism and radicalisation in London. The investigation has sought to assess London's preparedness for a terrorist attack, and efforts to prevent and tackle radicalisation.

The biggest threat in the UK remains that posed by Islamist terrorism but we also heard about the increased risk from extreme right-wing terrorism. We also saw the disconnect between Prevent referrals and Investigations – nationally, 80 per cent of live counter terror investigations are related to extremist Islamists, while only 22 per cent of Prevent referrals related to extremist Islamist concerns in 2020-21.

Most of us will be completely unaware of the immense work delivered each day to keep us safe from the threat of terrorism and I am confident that the Metropolitan Police Service (the Met) takes its responsibilities to counter terrorism incredibly seriously.

The Met will be further emboldened by the new Counter Terrorism Operations Centre, on course to be fully implemented by 2025. However, it does face significant challenges in recruiting and retaining the specialist officers and staff it needs to meet the threats of the future.

In the awful event that another terror attack does happen in London, we need all of our services to be prepared to respond rapidly and effectively. The failures identified in the emergency services response to the Manchester Arena attack have reinforced just how important this is.

One-year on from Lord Harris of Haringey's second major review into London's preparedness for a terror attack, the Committee is reassured that the Met, London Fire Brigade (LFB) and the London Ambulance Service are working hard to ensure they are ready

to respond to any major incident in London. However, with both the Met and LFB placed in a form of special measures, and all frontline services facing capacity pressures, it is crucial that all services continue to prioritise this vital work.

The Committee heard much about the increasingly diffuse and complex way in which people are being radicalised and accessing extremist content. We are concerned about how this makes it harder to identify those most at risk of radicalisation.

We also examined the Shawcross Independent Review into Prevent. Prevent plays an important role in addressing radicalisation, with its overarching objective to stop individuals from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. The Committee was told the programme is still subject to much opposition. Work needs to be done to address the issues underlying such negative perceptions of Prevent and ensure much wider support for efforts to stop people from becoming terrorists in the first place.

I welcome that the Government will be fully implementing the recommendations from the Shawcross review. This should go a long way to help prevent terrorism across the UK.

The Committee is grateful to all those that gave evidence to the Committee. Their insights will help make London a safer place to live and work.

This report makes several constructive recommendations, aimed largely at the Mayor, the Met and emergency services. I want Londoners to feel confident that everything is being done to keep them safe from harm. However, it is all our duty to remain aware, vigilant and prepared in our continual fight against terrorism. We can never be complacent.

## Executive Summary

In November 2022, the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee launched an investigation into counter-terrorism and radicalisation. The investigation has sought to assess the changing nature of terror in London, and to explore London's preparedness for a terrorist attack and how people are being safeguarded from radicalisation.

The investigation has consisted of two formal Committee meetings, held on 30 November 2022<sup>1</sup> and 11 January 2023.<sup>2</sup> It has also been informed by a meeting held on 8 March 2023 to discuss the findings of the Independent Review of Prevent.<sup>3</sup> The Committee is grateful to all those who gave their time to provide evidence.

The Committee's findings are set out in detail in the report. In summary, these include the following:

- One year on from the publication of Lord Harris' second review into London's preparedness for a major terrorist incident, the Committee is pleased to see that progress has been made by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the Metropolitan Police Service (the Met) to implement the review's recommendations.
- Once fully established, the Counter Terrorism Operations Centre will further enhance London and the UK's counter-terror operation.
- The Committee is disappointed that MOPAC has not reviewed whether the original aims of the Met's Basic Command Unit structure have been realised, as recommended by Lord Harris one year ago.
- The Met faces significant challenges in recruiting and retaining digital specialists into counter-terror policing. It will need to establish new partnerships and improve vetting processes in order to ensure it has the expertise it needs to meet the threats of the future.
- Progress has been made since Lord Harris' review to further improve how blue-light services work together to prepare for and respond to a terror attack. The London

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<sup>1</sup> See transcript for the meeting on 30 November 2022 [here](#), with guests: Lord Harris of Haringey; Brendan Cox, Survivors Against Terror; Charlotte Dixon-Sutcliffe, Survivors Against Terror; Robin Simcox, Commission of Countering Extremism; and Dr Shiraz Maher, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation.

<sup>2</sup> See transcript for the meeting on 11 January 2023 [here](#), with guests: Commander Richard Smith, Metropolitan Police Service; Chief Superintendent Helen Williams, Metropolitan Police Service; Kenny Bowie, MOPAC; Oliver Levinson, MOPAC; Deputy Commissioner Jonathan Smith, LFB.

<sup>3</sup> See transcript for the meeting on 8 March 2023 [here](#), with guests: Commander Dom Murphy QPM, Metropolitan Police Service; Detective Superintendent Jane Corrigan, Metropolitan Police Service; Kenny Bowie, MOPAC; Oliver Levinson, MOPAC.

Ambulance Service and London Fire Brigade are, however, facing significant pressures that could impede an effective response to a major incident.

- Staffing pressures faced by prisons and the London Probation Service risk undermining efforts to manage the risk posed by terrorist offenders to the public, staff and others in contact with the criminal justice system.
- Beyond emergency services, an effective response to tackling radicalisation and ensuring preparedness for a terror attack requires joint working with local authorities, community groups, private businesses and others. Counter-terrorism is a city-wide endeavour.
- Prevent is negatively perceived by many, and civil society opposition to the Independent Review of Prevent has risked further entrenching these views. More needs to be done to increase awareness of, and confidence in, Prevent as a key anti-radicalisation programme.
- With extremist ideologies becoming increasingly diversified and complex, it is important to better understand which people are most at risk of radicalisation.
- More people are becoming radicalised solely online; and it is becoming harder to track the way in which terrorists share extremist content online, and to remove this content. MOPAC needs a better strategic approach to tackling online harms, beyond the measures outlined in the Online Safety Bill.

The Committee makes the following 12 recommendations:

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

MOPAC should continue to provide the Committee with regular updates on its progress against Lord Harris' recommendations, until all recommendations are completed.

### Recommendation 2

By the end of 2023, MOPAC should conduct a review to assess whether the expected benefits of Basic Command Units have been realised, as recommended by Lord Harris. The findings of the review must inform any future reforms to neighbourhood policing.

### Recommendation 3

The Met should develop new partnerships with London universities and private-sector technology firms to establish secondment programmes for individuals with the digital skills required by a modern counter-terrorism operational response.

### Recommendation 4



MOPAC should work with the Met to channel additional resource into specialist vetting teams to ensure safe and efficient recruitment of specialist counter-terror officers and staff.

### **Recommendation 5**

By September 2023, the London Ambulance Service and the London Fire Brigade should provide a report to the London Assembly on the progress they have made in implementing Lord Harris' recommendations.

### **Recommendation 6**

The Mayor should seek assurance from the London Ambulance Service that its contingency plans to treat casualties in the context of a major terrorist attack are realistic and deliverable.

### **Recommendation 7**

MOPAC should convene the Met, London boroughs, the London Probation Service and London prisons to agree actions to improve how key information is shared between agencies, when terrorist risk offenders are released into the community.

### **Recommendation 8**

The Met and MOPAC should develop a joint publicity and community engagement programme to work with grassroots groups to address the issues causing negative perceptions of Prevent in London.

### **Recommendation 9**

MOPAC should assess the outputs of groups in London that have received funding from Prevent to ensure that there is not duplication with its own work and that its successes can be benchmarked.

### **Recommendation 10**

The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime should make representations at the London Contest Board that Prevent in London should continue to be led by evidence based demand to uphold its safeguarding responsibilities and prevent people from becoming involved in terrorism.

### **Recommendation 11**

MOPAC should work with the Met to conduct a review of the key risk factors for young people becoming radicalised. This could include a review of case files of successful Prevent referrals and young people arrested for terrorist offences over the past five years.

### **Recommendation 12**

Once the Online Safety Bill is passed, MOPAC should renew the terms of reference for its Online Harms Working Group, to enable it to provide strategic leadership on efforts to address online harms in London.

## Chapter one: counter-terror policing

### London and the risk of terrorism

No terrorist attacks have taken place in London since February 2020, when convicted terrorist Sudesh Amman stabbed and seriously injured two people in Streatham. However, the threat level for the UK from international terrorism is set to “substantial”.<sup>4</sup> London “bears the highest risk of terrorism in the UK” and also has the “largest number of high-profile targets and the greatest concentration of subjects of interest”.<sup>5</sup>

In 2016, the Mayor appointed Lord Harris of Haringey to conduct a “full and independent review to ensure London is as prepared as possible to respond to a major terrorist incident”.<sup>6</sup> The final report of the review was published in October 2016.<sup>7</sup> Lord Harris concluded, “The quality and effectiveness of the work done by the intelligence services and the counter-terrorist police is amongst the best in the world”.<sup>8</sup> He made 127 recommendations for improvement to a range of organisations, including the Home Office, the Metropolitan Police Service (the Met), the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the Mayor. In 2022, Lord Harris said that “virtually all” of the recommendations he made in 2016 have been implemented.<sup>9</sup>

In July 2021, the Mayor commissioned Lord Harris to undertake a second review of London’s preparedness for a terrorist attack in the context of the changing nature of the threat of terrorism – including rises in online extremism, extreme right-wing radicalisation and self-radicalisation, and an increased possibility of hostile state-sponsored acts against London.<sup>10</sup> Lord Harris made 294 recommendations focussing on several key areas, such as funding and resource for emergency services, and improving information sharing across those with a role to play in keeping London safe.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Threat levels are set by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre and are designed to give a broad indication of the likelihood of a terrorist attack. There are five levels: ‘low’ means an attack is highly unlikely; ‘moderate’ means an attack is possible, but not likely; ‘substantial’ means an attack is likely; ‘severe’ means an attack is highly likely; and ‘critical’ means an attack is highly likely in the near future – see MI5, [Threat Levels](#).

<sup>5</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.3

<sup>6</sup> Mayor of London, [Mayor of London appoints security expert Lord Harris to lead full terror preparedness review](#), 27 May 2016

<sup>7</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London’s preparedness to respond to a major terrorist incident](#), 28 October 2016

<sup>8</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London’s preparedness to respond to a major terrorist incident](#), 28 October 2016, p.3

<sup>9</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.5

<sup>10</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022

<sup>11</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022

In November 2022, Lord Harris gave evidence to the Committee in relation to his findings and the implementation of his recommendations.<sup>12</sup> He told the Committee that MOPAC had appointed a former senior police officer to help progress the recommendations.<sup>13</sup> He said that the Committee should request a report on the progress made to deliver his recommendations, 12 months on from the publication of his review.<sup>14</sup> Oliver Levinson, Head of Countering Violent Extremism, MOPAC, confirmed that MOPAC aimed to deliver a report to the London Assembly on the progress of implementing Lord Harris' recommendations by April 2023.<sup>15</sup>

Commander Richard Smith, former Head of Counter Terrorism Command at the Met, said he welcomed Lord Harris' two reviews into London's preparedness for a terror attack. He told the Committee there is "dedicated governance within the Met to drive through those actions as quickly and effectively as we can", and that the Met's leadership fully understands the importance of counter-terror policing.<sup>16</sup> He welcomed the Committee's investigation and said that public forums were important to keep terrorism "high on people's agendas".<sup>17</sup>

The Committee applauds the two comprehensive reviews conducted by Lord Harris and fully supports his recommendations. The Committee acknowledges the implementation of such a high number of recommendations may take some time. It will therefore continue to scrutinise the Met and MOPAC on their respective delivery of recommendations until they have been completed.

**Recommendation 1: MOPAC should continue to provide the Committee with regular updates on its progress against Lord Harris' recommendations, until all recommendations are completed.**

### **Delivery of counter-terror policing in London**

Counter Terrorism Policing is the national collaboration of police forces in the UK. The Met hosts the largest regional counter-terror unit in the UK, SO15. SO15 sits alongside Counter Terrorism Policing headquarters, which also houses the senior command functions and a number of the national counter-terrorism capabilities.<sup>18</sup>

In March 2018, the Mayor announced £412 million investment to create a new counter-terrorism and organised crime hub in the capital – the Counter Terrorism Operations Centre (CTOC).<sup>19</sup> CTOC enables co-location of the London-based Counter Terrorism Policing, intelligence agencies and the criminal justice system. CTOC is housed in the Empress State

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<sup>12</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript – panel 1](#), 30 November 2022

<sup>13</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript – panel 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.6

<sup>14</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript – panel 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.3

<sup>15</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.15

<sup>16</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.7

<sup>17</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.7

<sup>18</sup> Counter Terrorism Policing, [Our network](#)

<sup>19</sup> Mayor of London, [Mayor confirms £412m investment in new counter-terror hub](#), 26 March 2018

Building, West Brompton, bringing London into line with national standards as the last region to have a consolidated collaborative facility.<sup>20</sup> Lord Harris said in his 2022 review that co-location of respective agencies in CTOC is “already driving synergies and efficiencies, resulting in substantial operational benefits”.<sup>21</sup>

CTOC is due to be completed in 2024-25, with different functions, teams and organisations gradually moving in with a phased approach.<sup>22</sup> Commander Richard Smith confirmed to the Committee that CTOC is on schedule to be completed by 2025; and that, once completed, CTOC would provide the UK with a more effective and integrated counter-terror operation.<sup>23</sup> Lord Harris recommended that “requirements should be kept under review so operational improvements within CTOC can continue to be realised beyond 2025, and equipment kept up to date”.<sup>24</sup>

*“CTOC gives London – and the UK as being that central hub – the next step on that journey in terms of a really integrated approach to some of the highest threats that we are facing.”<sup>25</sup>*

**Commander Richard Smith, Metropolitan Police Service**

At the national and London-wide levels, the Committee is confident CTOC will enable a more effective and integrated counter-terror operation. However, the Committee has concerns about the delivery of counter-terror operations at the local level. In 2018, the Met replaced its 32 Borough Command Units with 12 Basic Command Units (BCUs). Each BCU contains a counter-terrorism Protect officer and other counter-terrorism functions, including Prevent officers. The boundaries of each BCU now incorporate up to four individual boroughs.<sup>26</sup>

In his 2022 review, Lord Harris said that these changes had “diluted” relationships between local police units and borough leadership teams. He said BCU commanders “are spread thinly and from the perspective of some local authorities, are struggling to remain in touch with communities and keep leaders up to date”.<sup>27</sup> Giving evidence to the Committee, Lord Harris reiterated his view that large BCUs made effective joint working harder to achieve.

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<sup>20</sup> DMPC Decision – PCD 335, [Central Estate Programme – Counter Terrorism and Organised Crime \(CTOC\) Hub – Full Business Case](#), March 2018

<sup>21</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.144

<sup>22</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.144

<sup>23</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023

<sup>24</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.144

<sup>25</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript – panel 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.11

<sup>26</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.67

<sup>27</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.67

*“I stress in the report the importance of good engagement between the police and emergency services and local authorities [...] That engagement is harder, it is not impossible, but it is harder if you have a BCU commander responsible for three boroughs, therefore three borough leaders, three sets of Councillors, all of that, it is just more remote, there is more to deal with.”<sup>28</sup>*

**Lord Harris of Haringey**

In Baroness Casey’s review into standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Met, she criticised the changes to neighbourhood policing structures, including the move to 12 BCUs.<sup>29</sup> She told the Committee such changes were “financially driven” and had led to the Met becoming more disconnected from London boroughs and Londoners.<sup>30</sup>

In his 2022 review, Lord Harris recommended that MOPAC should “assess whether the expected benefits [of the BCU model] as set out in the business case have been realised”.<sup>31</sup> Kenny Bowie, Director of Strategy and Met Oversight, MOPAC, did not say whether MOPAC would do this. He said that the Commissioners’ new priorities on neighbourhood policing might “slightly supersede where some of this goes”.<sup>32</sup>

The Committee is disappointed that MOPAC has not committed to a review of BCU structures, as recommended by Lord Harris. The Committee welcomes the Met’s recent commitment to appoint a Superintendent into each London borough, and hopes this will help to address some of the concerns raised about the current BCU structure.<sup>33</sup> However, a wider review of BCUs is still needed to ensure that any future changes to neighbourhood policing, delivered as part of the Met’s reform agenda, are informed by a strong understanding of the impact of the current model.

Commander Richard Smith told the Committee he did not think the change to BCU boundaries had made the Met more removed from local community tensions.<sup>34</sup> He is leading the implementation of Lord Harris’ recommendations aimed at improving how information is shared between counter-terror policing, BCUs and London boroughs at the Met. He said the Met is having discussions with local authorities and BCU commanders to increase confidence between parties that relevant information can be shared to address local counter-terrorism concerns.<sup>35</sup>

**Recommendation 2: By the end of 2023, MOPAC should conduct a review to assess whether the expected benefits of Basic Command Units have been realised, as**

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<sup>28</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript – panel 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.14

<sup>29</sup> MPS, [Baroness Casey Review](#), March 2023

<sup>30</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript – panel 1](#), 22 March 2023

<sup>31</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.67

<sup>32</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.12

<sup>33</sup> Met, [Every London borough to get a senior officer to lead local policing](#), 31 January 2023

<sup>34</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.12

<sup>35</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.13



recommended by Lord Harris. The findings of the review must inform any future reforms to neighbourhood policing.

### Counter-terrorism staffing

In his 2022 review, Lord Harris expressed concerns over counter-terror policing staffing. Although he welcomed the Met's recent uplift in police officers, he said it would take time to train newly recruited officers into specialist counter-terrorism roles.<sup>36</sup> His review recommended that the Met "should consider how to bolster officer retention" and conduct "research to better understand the drivers of departure among those who leave after only a few years".<sup>37</sup> Speaking to the Committee, Lord Harris said the Met may need to adapt its expectations to the modern job market, and how long police officers may want to serve.

*"The days when people went into policing with a view that it was a 30-year career and that they would then retire with a comparatively generous pension, I think those have gone. It may be that the police have to look at new ways of retaining and bringing people back into policing if they have perhaps gone away and done something else for a period. It is an area where more effort needs to be made."*<sup>38</sup>

**Lord Harris of Haringey**

Commander Richard Smith also told the Committee said that there are vacancies in counter-terror policing; and highlighted the specific challenge of recruitment and retention of specialist cyber staff and officers.<sup>39</sup>

*"It is fair to say that we have vacancies at the moment, and we are recruiting from the wider MPS and elsewhere to fill those gaps. It is also fair to say that there is a long-term challenge in being able to ensure across the whole of the counter-terror machine that we have particularly very technical skills available to us."*<sup>40</sup>

**Commander Richard Smith, Metropolitan Police Service**

Commander Richard Smith said, "The high-end technical skills around data and digital analytics and technology are in huge demand, not just in our industry but across all of the private sector and public sector as well".<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Lord Harris said the Met faces stiff competition from the private sector for securing and retaining staff with specialist digital skills.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London's Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.3

<sup>37</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London's Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.61

<sup>38</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee- transcript 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.12

<sup>39</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.13

<sup>40</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.13

<sup>41</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.13

<sup>42</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023; London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 1](#), 30 November 2022

*“You have somebody who has the skills in this area, they are a valuable commodity. Inevitably, the public sector, whether it is the police or whether it is the security agencies, or whatever else it might be, they do not pay as much as the private sector.”<sup>43</sup>*

**Lord Harris of Haringey**

The Committee agrees that, due to market competition for some technical skills required by counter-terror policing, the Met needs to think innovatively about different ways of attracting specialist staff, to ensure it has the pipeline of digital specialists it needs to maintain its counter-terrorism capability into the future. This should include exploring partnerships with universities and private-sector technology firms. Any partnerships with the private sector, including the development of secondments or fixed-term placement opportunities, must include safeguards to ensure they are delivered solely for the purpose of public benefit.

**Recommendation 3: The Met should develop new partnerships with London universities and private-sector technology firms to establish secondment programmes for individuals with the digital skills required by a modern counter-terrorism operational response.**

Commander Richard Smith told the Committee that officers and staff required specialist vetting to be able to move into counter-terror policing, but delays to vetting processes were slowing down recruitment.<sup>44</sup>

*“Vetting is complex, it is lengthy and there is increasing pressure in terms of volumes coming through the vetting system, in terms of both recruiting generally and the specialist vetting that we require, which is slowing that down. That is a very active issue for us at the moment, to look at what we can do to reduce vetting times and make sure that when we have a vacancy, we are able to fill it quickly.”<sup>45</sup>*

**Commander Richard Smith, Metropolitan Police Service**

He said challenges with vetting had existed for some time, but additional resource for specialist vetting would be “certainly very welcome”. He also said improvements could be made to existing vetting processes to eliminate some of these issues.<sup>46</sup>

Several recent examples of serving officers committing serious crimes have increased scrutiny on the Met’s approach to vetting across the organisation. The Committee supports the Commissioners decision to instigate re-vetting of currently serving officers and staff where concerning behaviour has been identified.<sup>47</sup> Important findings in relation to vetting are also expected to emerge from the Angiolini Inquiry.<sup>48</sup> The Committee believes it is right

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<sup>43</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee- transcript 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.8

<sup>44</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.14

<sup>45</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.14

<sup>46</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.14

<sup>47</sup> Met, [The Met vows action on misconduct through re-vetting to rebuild trust and confidence](#), 13 March 2023

<sup>48</sup> The Angiolini Inquiry was set up to examine Wayne Couzens’ career and previous behaviour to identify whether opportunities were missed to remove him from the Met. In February 2023, the Home Office

that attention is focussed on strengthening the Met’s vetting procedures. It hopes such a focus can also lead to increased resourcing across the vetting system, including into specialist vetting teams, so specialist counter-terror staff can be recruited safely and efficiently.

**Recommendation 4: MOPAC should work with the Met to channel additional resource into specialist vetting teams to ensure safe and efficient recruitment of specialist counter-terror officers and staff.**

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announced that the criminal behaviour of David Carrick, and decisions related to his police vetting, would also be looked at by the Angiolini Inquiry. See more information about the Angiolini Inquiry [here](#).

## Chapter two: emergency services and other key partners

### London Fire Brigade preparedness

The London Fire Brigade (LFB) is the busiest fire and rescue service in the UK and describes itself as “one of the largest firefighting and rescue organisations in the world”.<sup>49</sup> In its 2021-22 recent inspection report, His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) graded LFB as “requires improvement”.<sup>50,51</sup>

Despite the several areas for concern highlighted by the inspection, HMICFRS found that LFB is well prepared for major incidents in London and praised how it worked alongside other emergency services. Lord Harris echoed this in his findings: “Resources available to the LFB to respond to a major terrorist incident, including one perpetrated across multiple locations, are adequate”.<sup>52</sup>

However, LFB often has several appliances unavailable for deployment, due in part to staffing shortages and the way in which LFB manages its training.<sup>53</sup> This leads to LFB having significantly reduced capacity. For example, on 29 July 2022, when LFB faced its busiest day since World War II due to heat-related fires, it had 39 of its 142 appliances unavailable for deployment.<sup>54</sup> Deputy Commissioner Jonathan Smith, LFB, told the Committee that LFB faces competing threats and challenges that have never been more complicated. He said LFB is conducting strategic planning on how to respond to multiple challenges (for example, a climate event and a simultaneous terror attack).<sup>55</sup>

*“In terms of the competing threats and challenges that we face as an emergency service [...] they are probably more complex and nuanced than they have ever been before in terms of the types of incidents that we may face and we may face concurrently. That is very much part of our strategic thinking in making sure we have got the right resource in the right place at the right time to be able to be flex.”<sup>56</sup>*

**Deputy Commissioner Jonathan Smith, London Fire Brigade**

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<sup>49</sup> LFB, [About us](#)

<sup>50</sup> HMICFRS, [Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2021-22 – London Fire Brigade](#), 27 July 2022. NB: this is based on a four-tier grading system: outstanding; good; requires improvement; and inadequate.

<sup>51</sup> After an Independent Culture Review commissioned by LFB found evidence of discrimination and bullying across the brigade, LFB was also placed into Engage by HMICFRS – a form of enhanced monitoring of its performance. See: HMICFRS, [London Fire Brigade moved into enhanced monitoring](#), 14 December 2022

<sup>52</sup> Lord Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.87

<sup>53</sup> London Assembly, [FREP Committee – transcript](#), 22 September 2022

<sup>54</sup> London Assembly, [FREP Committee – transcript](#), 22 September 2022

<sup>55</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.19

<sup>56</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.19

HMICFRS also found, in its inspection, that LFB had not trained all its frontline staff to respond to a marauding terrorist attack, due to an ongoing dispute with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).<sup>57</sup> Deputy Commissioner Jonathan Smith told the Committee that, following an agreement with the FBU, LFB now had a clear path to ensure that all firefighters are trained to respond to a marauding terrorist attack.<sup>58</sup> He said only 20 per cent of staff are currently trained to the required standard, but that all staff should be trained by the end of March 2024.<sup>59</sup> The Committee is pleased to see progress in addressing this training gap and hopes that all firefighters are trained as soon as possible.

### London Ambulance Service preparedness

London Ambulance Service (LAS) is the largest and busiest ambulance service in the UK, and is central to the emergency response to major incidents and terrorist threats in the capital.<sup>60</sup> In its most recent inspection from the Care Quality Commission (CQC), in January 2019, the LAS received a rating of ‘good’.<sup>61</sup>

In his 2022 review, Lord Harris said he was “extremely concerned about the current capacity of the LAS and the NHS in London to respond to a major terror attack”.<sup>62</sup> He also told the Committee that he was concerned about “the state of the LAS in responding to anything, let alone a major emergency”.<sup>63</sup> The Committee also notes the additional pressures faced by LAS since Lord Harris’ review, including strike action that prevented the LAS from giving evidence to the Committee in person.

Lord Harris found in his review that “the totality of LAS funding is clearly inadequate for the pressures on the service” and recommended that NHS England should award the LAS a funding uplift.<sup>64</sup> In written evidence to the Committee, the LAS said it agreed with Lord Harris’ recommendation that it needs a funding uplift, and said: “[The] LAS should receive additional funding to reflect the heightened costs inherent in providing an emergency ambulance service to a capital city alongside an uplift which reflects the additional threats of terrorism”.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> HMICFRS, [Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2021-22 – London Fire Brigade](#), 27 July 2022

<sup>58</sup> LFB/FBU, [Collective Agreement: Marauding Terrorist Attack](#), December 2021; London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.19

<sup>59</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.19

<sup>60</sup> CQC, [London Ambulance Service NHS Trust](#), 3 January 2019

<sup>61</sup> CQC, [London Ambulance Service NHS Trust](#), 3 January 2019. The CQC uses the following inspection ratings: Outstanding; Good; Requires Improvement; and Inadequate. See [here](#).

<sup>62</sup> Lord Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.74

<sup>63</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee- transcript 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.20

<sup>64</sup> Lord Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, 078

<sup>65</sup> LAS, Written evidence, 15 February 2023



In his review, Lord Harris also expressed a specific concern about delays to ambulance handovers, the process of moving a patient from an ambulance to an accident and emergency department upon arriving at hospital. Ambulance handover delays reached unprecedented levels nationally in October 2022, when 71 per cent of all handovers exceeded 15 minutes and 18 per cent exceeded 60 minutes.<sup>66</sup> The mean handover time in October 2022 was over 42 minutes (double what it was in October 2020).

Lord Harris warned that handover delays lead to ambulances queuing up outside hospitals and could have a major impact on the LAS' ability to respond to a major incident. He also warned that queuing ambulances presented a possible target for a terrorist attack in itself. In written evidence to the Committee, the LAS said it has a robust Incident Response Plan, which "includes an agreed 'Rapid Offload' at hospitals across London to ensure our ambulance response is met".<sup>67</sup>

In his 2022 review, Lord Harris recommended: "The Mayor may wish to seek assurance from the Department for Health and Social Care that should a major terrorist attack be carried out in London, the contingency measures in place to treat casualties in the context of current nationwide demands on the NHS, including across acute care capabilities, are realistic".<sup>68</sup>

The Committee agrees that assurances should be sought by the Mayor from the NHS that realistic LAS contingency plans are currently in place.

**Recommendation 5: By September 2023, the LAS and LFB should provide a one-year-on report to the London Assembly on the progress they have made in implementing Lord Harris' recommendations.**

**Recommendation 6: The Mayor should seek assurance from the LAS that its contingency plans to treat casualties in the context of a major terrorist attack are realistic and deliverable.**

## Emergency service interoperability

An independent public inquiry on the 2017 Manchester Arena terror attack found inadequacies in the planning, preparation and response by emergency services.<sup>69</sup> It highlighted how the failure to follow Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Programme (JESIP) guidance contributed to significant delays in ambulance and fire crews attending the

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<sup>66</sup> Association of Ambulance Chief Executives, [National Ambulance Data](#), 25 November 2022

<sup>67</sup> LAS, Written evidence, 15 February 2023

<sup>68</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London's Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.75

<sup>69</sup> Manchester Arena Inquiry, [Volume 2: Emergency Response](#), November 2022 (please note this is published in two reports: Volume 2-I and Volume 2-II).

scene of the attack.<sup>70</sup> It concluded, “Looked at overall, and objectively, the performance of the emergency services was far below the standard it should have been”.<sup>71</sup>

In his 2022 review, Lord Harris said he was “assured that cross-agency relationships are more firmly entrenched” in London compared to Manchester. He said: “I am confident that in responding to a future terrorist attack, the challenges witnessed with, for example, the emergency services response to the attack at Manchester Arena would not present themselves in London”.<sup>72</sup>

Giving evidence to the Committee, he said “some of the issues about the relationships between the different emergency services” that occurred during the Manchester Arena incident would have been “handled better” in London.<sup>73</sup>

Deputy Commissioner Jonathan Smith, Commander Richard Smith and Kenny Bowie all welcomed Lord Harris’ recognition of the close joint working conducted by emergency services in London. The Committee heard several examples of how joint working had been further improved since Lord Harris’ review:

- Commander Richard Smith and Deputy Commissioner Jonathan Smith said improvements had been made to how operational information is shared between each service control room during a major incident.<sup>74</sup>
- Chief Superintendent Helen Williams, Commander for Protective Security Operations for the Met, said the Met and LFB co-chair a new multi-agency Prepare board which feeds into the London board of CONTEST, the Government’s counter-terrorism strategy.<sup>75</sup>
- Chief Superintendent Helen Williams shared with the Committee examples of major multi-agency exercises in London to test operational response to a major incident. She said each exercise is evaluated and the learning from each is fed into the next one.<sup>76</sup>
- Deputy Commissioner Jonathan Smith said the three heads of LFB, the LAS and the Met now meet formally each quarter, addressing a recommendation by Lord Harris for such a forum to be established.<sup>77</sup>

The Committee welcomes the positive progress that has been made since Lord Harris’ review to further improve how blue-light services work together to prepare for a terror attack.

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<sup>70</sup> [JESIP models](#) provide the national standard for interoperability, including in response to a major incident.

<sup>71</sup> Manchester Arena Inquiry, [Volume 2-I: Emergency Response](#), November 2022, p.iv

<sup>72</sup> Lord Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.76

<sup>73</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.1

<sup>74</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.17

<sup>75</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.17

<sup>76</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.17

<sup>77</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.15

## Criminal justice system

Data published by the Home Office shows that there were 239 people in custody for terrorism-connected offences as of 30 September 2022.<sup>78</sup> Of those in custody, the majority (65 per cent) were categorised as holding Islamist extremist views, and 28 per cent were categorised as holding extreme right-wing ideologies. In the year to 30 June 2022, a total of 29 prisoners held for terrorism-related or terrorism-connected offences were released from custody in Britain.<sup>79</sup>

In written evidence to the Committee, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) said the decision to end automatic early release, and the introduction of longer prison sentences, for the most dangerous terrorist offenders may result in an increase of up to 150 additional people in custody for terrorism-connected offences at any given time.<sup>80</sup>

There is a risk that those convicted of extremism-related offences could radicalise others in prison who previously did not hold extremist views. In 2021-22, 6.6 per cent of all Prevent duty referrals in London came through HMPPS, which was higher than the national average of 4.5 per cent.<sup>81</sup> Robin Simcox, Commissioner for Countering Extremism, told the Committee that prison was seen by convicted terrorists as a continuation of their struggle. He said that counter-terror was only a small part of the many responsibilities held by prison staff.<sup>82</sup> The threat posed by terrorist offenders in contact with the criminal justice system was starkly displayed by appalling attacks at Fishmongers' Hall in 2019 and in Streatham in 2020. Both attacks were perpetrated by convicted terrorists.

In written evidence, HMPPS said it is vigilant to the threat of radicalisation in prisons, and described several measures to both restrict interactions between terrorists and the wider prison population, and rehabilitate people whilst in custody. This includes the provision of separation centres – spaces in the prison estate where influential terrorists can be moved to be completely apart from the main prison population, to stop the spread of radicalisation amongst prisoners. Two of the three centres at HMP Frankland and HMP Full Sutton are currently operational. HMPPS said if all three separation centres are operational, it has a total capacity for 28 places. It would not disclose the current number of prisoners held in separation centres as it is operationally sensitive information.<sup>83</sup>

Lord Harris told the Committee that information about high-risk-of-harm terrorist offenders being released into the community is not always shared properly between HMPPS, the Met and London boroughs.<sup>84</sup> He said London boroughs needed to know who was being released

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<sup>78</sup> Home Office, [Operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 statistics](#), 8 December 2022

<sup>79</sup> Home Office, [Operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 statistics](#), 8 December 2022

<sup>80</sup> HMPPS, Written evidence, 20 February 2023

<sup>81</sup> Home Office, [Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, April 2021 to March 2022](#), 26 January 2023

<sup>82</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.14

<sup>83</sup> HMPPS, Written evidence, 20 February 2023

<sup>84</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.17

back into their area in order to put proper measures in place. He also said information sharing could be improved by having more people outside of counter-terror police vetted to a high level, so they can receive sensitive information; and by counter-terror police being more prepared to share information in a way that is useful to London boroughs but does not betray sensitive intelligence.<sup>85</sup>

In January 2023, the Committee published the findings of its investigation into probation services in London.<sup>86</sup> The report raised serious concerns over staffing levels at the London Probation Service, impacting every aspect of its work, including resettlement activity for people entering the community from prison.

Commander Richard Smith said that collaboration between the Met and HMPPS had improved.<sup>87</sup> He said a specialist team in London Probation Service was now subject to higher vetting requirements in order that sensitive information can be exchanged between police and probation to manage those that pose greatest risk of harm. In written evidence, HMPPS described its arrangements for sharing information with partner agencies for offenders subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).<sup>88</sup> It said changes to MAPPA in 2022 have ensured local authority Prevent leads are now made aware of individuals posing terrorist risk in their communities.<sup>89</sup>

**Recommendation 7: MOPAC should convene the Met, London boroughs, the London Probation Service and London prisons to agree actions to improve how key information is shared between agencies, when terrorist risk offenders are released into the community.**

### A city-wide endeavour

Beyond emergency services, Lord Harris told the Committee that preparedness for a major incident was a city-wide endeavour and required joint working with partners across local authorities, civil society and business.<sup>90</sup>

*“It is about maintaining the focus and also maintaining the focus on joint working. That is not just joint working within the Mayor’s family; it is joint working with local government; it is joint working with the voluntary and community sector; it is joint working with business. [...] it seems to me that if you are to be effective in preparing for terrorism or preventing terrorism, that is something that the whole of society needs to be involved in.”<sup>91</sup>*

**Lord Harris of Haringey**

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<sup>85</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.17

<sup>86</sup> London Assembly, [Probation Services in London](#), 20 January 2023

<sup>87</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.38

<sup>88</sup> Some people under probation supervision deemed to be of high risk of harm to others are subjected to MAPPA, which require the police and probation service to work collaboratively to coordinate sentence management.

<sup>89</sup> HMPPS, Written evidence, 20 February 2023

<sup>90</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 1](#), 30 November 2022

<sup>91</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.5

He told the Committee that the management of large-scale public events continued to be a challenge, and that it was important all agencies involved in putting on such an event understand their respective responsibilities for keeping people safe. He expressed some concern that: “the skills acquired by security, hospitality and retail staff to spot suspicious behaviour will have been lost during COVID-19, due to people changing roles or being furloughed and therefore having less exposure to busy public spaces”. He said that hospitality must maintain its focus on security and protecting people.<sup>92</sup>

Commander Richard Smith told the Committee that it was a challenge to keep counter-terrorism high up on the agenda of the public, as: “the more successful we are in keeping people safe, the greater the risk that other stakeholders become complacent, and that the public cease to be vigilant because they think that this problem has gone away”.<sup>93</sup> He said a terror threat has always existed and people need to stay vigilant.

*“London’s history back through the centuries shows this problem has never gone away. It changes, it morphs, it manifests itself in different ways. Last year nobody in the UK died as a result of a terrorist act and I am hugely proud of that fact. But that is as a result of a huge amount of effort that is largely unseen, and it is that risk of complacency that concerns me.”<sup>94</sup>*

**Commander Richard Smith, Metropolitan Police Service**

He said public forums to discuss terrorism threats, such as the Committee meetings, give the Met an opportunity to keep terrorism in public consciousness. He said they also help to: “reinforce the fact that huge amounts of effort, not just by blue-light services and our partners, but also the wider public and the whole of the counter-terrorism machine, which includes everyone, and is international, is required in order to keep people safe”.<sup>95</sup>

He stressed, however, that London was “one of the safest global cities in the world, if not the safest” and “there is a balance to be struck in ensuring the public remain alert but not alarmed”.<sup>96</sup>

Lord Harris said “some local authorities are better than others” at engaging with communities as part of its counter-terrorism response.<sup>97</sup> He said both London boroughs and the Met risk missing “that granularity and that level of understanding and relationship” with local communities.<sup>98</sup> He also said people are more likely to share concerns with the police if they believe that the police “are genuinely trying to be mutually supportive”.<sup>99</sup> He said that

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<sup>92</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.3

<sup>93</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.7

<sup>94</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.7

<sup>95</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.7

<sup>96</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.10

<sup>97</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.7

<sup>98</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.7

<sup>99</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.15



low levels of trust and confidence in the police will “inevitably” have a consequence on people’s willingness to disclose concerns from their communities, and that rebuilding confidence at the local level takes time and requires officers who are engaging regularly and are known by local communities.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 1](#), 30 November 2022, p.16

## Chapter three: countering radicalisation

### Prevent

Prevent is one of the four key themes of the Government’s counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST.<sup>101</sup> The provisions under Prevent aim to safeguard people from radicalisation and prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.<sup>102</sup>

Prevent is a national programme, delivered by a range of multi-agency partners at the local level. In London, the Met takes a lead role, alongside London boroughs, in the delivery and coordination of Prevent across the city. The Met has over 1,500 Prevent champions based in BCUs to promote and support the programme; and the Met has responsibility for assessing people who are referred into Prevent and directing the response from relevant services.<sup>103</sup>

The Mayor’s London CONTEST Board provides a strategic lead for overseeing the delivery of Prevent in London. The Board is made up of representatives from MOPAC, the Met, the Home Office, NHS England, the City of London, the National Probation Service, Transport for London, the Department for Education and London Councils.<sup>104</sup> MOPAC publishes agenda summaries of its CONTEST meetings.<sup>105</sup>

Since 2011, the London Prevent Board has also brought together key partners with responsibility for the delivery of Prevent in London. Its membership is largely made up of Chief Executives of London boroughs, alongside representatives from Met, Home Office and MOPAC. The London Prevent Board reports into the London CONTEST Board.<sup>106</sup>

In his 2022 review, Lord Harris said: “The views of Prevent put to me have largely been positive, with widespread recognition that in the face of increasing levels of extremism and polarising narratives within mainstream society it represents a crucial part of identifying and managing risk and offers a welcome focus on the need to safeguard vulnerable individuals”.<sup>107</sup>

However, he identified several areas for attention to enhance the impact of Prevent in London, including for long-term funding to be allocated to London boroughs and to the NHS

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<sup>101</sup> The Government conducted a major review of Prevent in 2011 and published a [Prevent Strategy](#). This has now been superseded by the updated [Counter-terrorism strategy \(CONTEST\)](#) in 2018. The Government [has committed to publishing a revised CONTEST strategy in 2023](#).

<sup>102</sup> Home Office, [CONTEST countering terrorism strategy](#), June 2018, p.35

<sup>103</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>104</sup> MOPAC, [London CONTEST board meeting note](#), 14 June 2021

<sup>105</sup> City Hall, [London CONTEST Board](#)

<sup>106</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023, p.5

<sup>107</sup> Lord Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.95

to maintain dedicated Prevent function; and to ensure staff across health, education and London boroughs are able to spot signs of radicalisation and take necessary action.<sup>108</sup>

In January 2021, the Government appointed William Shawcross as the Independent Reviewer of Prevent.<sup>109</sup> William Shawcross delivered his recommendations to the Home Office in April 2022<sup>110</sup> and the final review was published on 8 February 2023.<sup>111</sup> The Government has accepted all 34 recommendations made by Shawcross and has published a full response to the review.<sup>112</sup> The Government has said it will consider the review as it updates its CONTEST strategy later in 2023.<sup>113</sup>

Commander Dom Murphy QPM, Head of Counter Terrorism Command SO15 at the Met, told the Committee that he welcomed the opportunity presented by the Independent Review of Prevent to consider improvements to the delivery of Prevent in London.<sup>114</sup> Detective Superintendent Jane Corrigan, Head of SO15 Local Operations and Prevent lead at the Met, said, “It is helpful if you put a spotlight on Prevent; it is good because it gets people talking”.<sup>115</sup> MOPAC welcomed aspects of the review but said it did not agree with all recommendations made.

*“The Independent Review has offered some recommendations that will improve the systems within Prevent and that should be welcomed. There are a number of recommendations that we are pleased to see. [...] There are some recommendations that we do not necessarily agree with, and I do not think that will be a surprise to anybody.”<sup>116</sup>*

**Oliver Levinson, MOPAC**

## Prevent duty

People can be referred to Prevent where a risk of someone being drawn into terrorism has been identified. The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 introduced the Prevent Duty on specified authorities such as local authorities, education institutions, health bodies and criminal justice services to safeguard people from being drawn into terrorism.<sup>117</sup>

Where risks are identified, staff working in these specified authorities are expected to make a referral to the relevant Prevent lead in their area. This then goes through a process of assessment by the police; and, for cases where genuine vulnerabilities related to terrorism

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<sup>108</sup> Lord Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022

<sup>109</sup> Home Office, [William Shawcross to lead independent review of Prevent](#), 26 January 2021

<sup>110</sup> The Guardian, [Leaked Prevent review attacks ‘double standards’ on far right and Islamists](#), 16 May 2022

<sup>111</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023

<sup>112</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023

<sup>113</sup> Home Office, [Review of government counter-terror strategy to tackle threats](#), 30 October 2022

<sup>114</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023, p.2

<sup>115</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>116</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>117</sup> Home Office, [CONTEST: the United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism](#), June 2018, p.35

are identified, referrals are further assessed by a multi-agency Channel panel, who can offer various types of support addressing educational, vocational, mental health and other vulnerabilities.<sup>118</sup>

Commander Dom Murphy QPM told the Committee that the “Prevent Duty is a good thing, it is something we need”. He said, however, Prevent needs to be “socialised more” so that people with relevant responsibilities are able to make referrals.<sup>119</sup> The Independent Review of Prevent described the Prevent Duty as “one of the most important aspects of Prevent”.<sup>120</sup> It recommended exploring “extending the Prevent Duty to immigration and asylum (through UK Border Force, Immigration and Protection Directorate) and to job centres via the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)”.<sup>121</sup> In response, the Government has said it would consider extending the Prevent Duty to these agencies as part of the refresh of the CONTEST strategy.<sup>122</sup>

Detective Superintendent Jane Corrigan told the Committee that she welcomed the recommendation by the Independent Review of Prevent to extend the Prevent Duty to new agencies.<sup>123</sup> Oliver Levinson said this would be needed to be managed carefully, to avoid the risk of “potentially creating fuel for the people who are in the anti-Prevent lobby”, who could present the extension of Prevent Duty to immigration or the DWP as a stigmatisation of migrants or people suffering from economic disadvantage.<sup>124</sup>

## Community support for Prevent

The Committee heard from guests that Prevent enjoys broad support across most communities, but that there is a significant number of people who hold negative perceptions of the programme. Dr Shiraz Maher, Director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, King’s College London, said that “overzealous” Prevent referrals had damaged trust in the programme in its early years, and had been “used to undermine and spread this perception that in fact Prevent is there as a pernicious tool of the state to undermine legitimate activism, legitimate dissent, legitimate alternative views”.<sup>125</sup> Brendan Cox from Survivors Against Terror told the Committee that “in most communities, in most places, at most times, it [Prevent] is trusted”.<sup>126</sup> However, he acknowledged that there were still people who were suspicious of the programme.

The Independent Review of Prevent noted, “Prevent has been the subject of vociferous criticism”.<sup>127</sup> It said that, while “an increasing number of studies have found majority

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<sup>118</sup> Home Office, [Making a referral to Prevent](#), 24 October 2022

<sup>119</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023, p.17

<sup>120</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023, p.80

<sup>121</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023, p.159

<sup>122</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023

<sup>123</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>124</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>125</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.12

<sup>126</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.9

<sup>127</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023, p.126

support for the programme or the principles which underpin it”, there are still many concerns related to Prevent, including perceptions that it is “discriminatory and leading to unfair targeting of certain ethnic or religious communities”, unfairly targets Muslims and that Prevent spies on people.<sup>128</sup>

The review also reported that there has been a “concerted campaign by some, including a number of Islamist groups, to undermine and delegitimise Prevent” and that “certain criticisms of Prevent are being made by those naturally hostile to it”.<sup>129</sup> It recommended that the Homeland Security Group should set up a dedicated unit to “rapidly rebut misinformation about Prevent and challenge inaccuracies via traditional and social media” and “coordinate with government departments to produce national resources for civil society organisations and Prevent delivery partners in local communities”.<sup>130</sup>

Oliver Levinson praised the Independent Review of Prevent for highlighting the prevalence of misinformation related to Prevent and welcomed the recommendation to tackle these myths in a more transparent way.

*“There are good recommendations in the Shawcross review about rebutting – more transparently and openly – criticisms of Prevent. I think that is really good. Because they can become somewhat urban legend and urban myth, which it does not matter if they are true or not because the perception creates a disengagement with the strategy.”<sup>131</sup>*

**Oliver Levinson, MOPAC**

### **Recommendation 8: The Met and MOPAC should develop a joint publicity and community engagement programme to work with grassroots groups to address the issues causing negative perceptions of Prevent in London.**

The Independent Review of Prevent took some time to deliver its findings. Lord Carlile QC was initially appointed to lead the review in August 2019 but was forced to step down after a legal challenge over his appointment.<sup>132</sup> In January 2021, the Government appointed William Shawcross to lead the review,<sup>133</sup> but his appointment was again met with opposition due to a perception that Shawcross held an anti-Muslim bias.<sup>134</sup> Several human rights organisations committed to boycott the review.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023, p.125-128

<sup>129</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023, p.8

<sup>130</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023, p.162

<sup>131</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>132</sup> Leigh Day, [Rights Watch \(UK\) to Challenge Appointment of Independent Reviewer of Prevent](#), 19 August 2019

<sup>133</sup> Home Office, [William Shawcross to lead independent review of Prevent](#), 26 January 2021

<sup>134</sup> Liberty, [Rights groups boycott Prevent review](#), 16 February 2021

<sup>135</sup> Liberty, [Rights groups boycott Prevent review](#), 16 February 2021

Kenny Bowie said some of the organisations who boycotted the review were the “usual suspects” who would not have engaged with the review “regardless of who the reviewer had been, regardless of what the terms of reference had been”.<sup>136</sup> However, he said it was a missed opportunity that other organisations, such as Amnesty International, also boycotted the review. Oliver Levinson said he didn’t think the review would help increase support for Prevent amongst those who were already sceptical.<sup>137</sup>

## Threats from different ideologies

In his 2022 review, Lord Harris said that the “biggest threat in the UK remains that posed by Islamist terrorism”.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, Robin Simcox told the Committee that “Islamism remains the most pressing ideology that the security services and police are having to deal with”. He also said that Islamist terrorism is the “urgent threat” in its “desire and ability to conduct mass casualty attacks”.<sup>139</sup>

In his review, Lord Harris noted the increased threat from extreme right-wing terrorism, highlighting the proscription of several groups associated with extreme right-wing narratives in the past five years, including National Action.<sup>140</sup> He cited the 2021 annual update provided by MI5 Director General Ken McCallum, which highlighted extreme-right-wing cases comprise around one in five counter-terrorist investigations.<sup>141</sup>

The Independent Review of Prevent found that Prevent does not give sufficient attention to Islamism. The report found that 80 per cent of live counter-terror investigations are related to extremist Islamists, while only 22 per cent of Prevent referrals for 2020-21 nationally related to extremist Islamist concerns.<sup>142</sup> The review said this suggests Prevent has become “out of kilter with the rest of the counter-terrorism system”.<sup>143</sup> Robin Simcox told the Committee, “The fact that Islamism is a relatively small part of the Prevent referrals but a very large part of work going on by the police and intelligence services suggests to me something has gone slightly askew.”<sup>144</sup>

Commander Dom Murphy QPM said London does not follow the national trend, and in fact Prevent referrals related to Islamist views far outnumber referrals related to extreme right-wing views.<sup>145</sup> In 2021-22, national referrals to Prevent related to concerns over extreme

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<sup>136</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>137</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>138</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.17

<sup>139</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.4

<sup>140</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.17

<sup>141</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.17

<sup>142</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023, p.7

<sup>143</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023, p.7

<sup>144</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.8

<sup>145</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023



right-wing radicalisation (1,309) outnumbered those related to concerns over extreme Islamist radicalisation (1,027). However, this is not the case in London where over three times as many referrals to Prevent were driven by concerns over extreme Islamist radicalisation (384) compared to extreme right-wing radicalisation (122).<sup>146</sup>

The Independent Review of Prevent also suggested that Prevent used an overly broad definition of extreme right-wing ideology that included “mildly controversial or provocative forms of mainstream, right-wing leaning commentary that have no meaningful connection to terrorism or radicalisation”. It said this compared to a much narrower approach to Islamism, that centred around proscribed organisations rather than non-violent Islamist narratives.<sup>147</sup> The review also expressed concern “that a culture of timidity exists among practitioners in the round when it comes to tackling Islamism”.<sup>148</sup>

Kenny Bowie told the Committee that he agreed with the Independent Review of Prevent that “thresholds should be set at the same level regardless of what ideology you are talking about” but he said the concerns highlighted in the report do not reflect his experience of Prevent delivery in London. Both Commander Dom Murphy QPM and Kenny Bowie said that the work done by Prevent partners in London follows the level of threat and responses are applied evenly regardless of ideology.<sup>149</sup>

*“Where we see that threat and harm to the public, or where we see that threat and harm to individuals who may be being drawn into an ideology as a result of a vulnerability of some kind, or an intention, then we respond to that threat. We are less driven by an ideology, but driven by the threat, which is a point that the review brings out quite strongly and is something that we in London particularly – but for the whole Prevent network – are involved in.”<sup>150</sup>*

**Commander Dom Murphy QPM, Metropolitan Police Service**

## Prevent funding and the Shared Endeavour Fund

In 2020–21, the Home Office distributed Prevent funding to 79 community organisations to deliver projects across 44 local authorities in England and Wales.<sup>151</sup> Projects are funded to help meet Prevent’s first objective to “tackle the causes of radicalisation and respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism”, but the Independent Review of Prevent review found that funding “too often goes towards generic projects dealing with community cohesion and hate crime” rather than publicly contesting extremist discourse.<sup>152</sup> In response to the

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<sup>146</sup> Home Office, [Individuals referred to Prevent Programme 2021/2022](#), 26 January 2023

<sup>147</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023, p.7

<sup>148</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023, p.8

<sup>149</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>150</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>151</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023

<sup>152</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023

review, the Government has said it will refocus its Prevent funding on projects that “explicitly counter radicalisation and challenge extremist and terrorist ideology”.<sup>153</sup>

The Independent Review of Prevent also found that there were “inadequate mechanisms to evaluate individual projects” and to assess the impact that Prevent funding has had. It also expressed concern that some organisations funded through Prevent have actively promoted extremist narratives.<sup>154</sup> In response, the Government said it would strengthen its due diligence to ensure “Prevent funding does not reach those linked to extremism”, and that it would implement a new evaluation strategy for Prevent projects.<sup>155</sup>

MOPAC distributes funding to “community projects tackling extremism, hate, intolerance and radicalisation across London”, through its Shared Endeavour Fund.<sup>156,157</sup> Though a separate fund, it shares similar aims with the Home Office-led Prevent funding programme. Oliver Levinson told the Committee the Shared Endeavour Fund only distributed money to projects with “some connectivity to extremism and radicalisation”. However, he said there are a wide range of projects that can be effective to achieving these aims, including psychosocial interventions aimed at increasing someone’s sense of purpose, belonging or empathy towards others. He said it was important have a “rounded portfolio to counter extremism and safeguard people who are vulnerable to radicalisation”.<sup>158</sup>

Kenny Bowie told the Committee that MOPAC conducts due diligence on organisations funded through the Shared Endeavour Fund and he was “confident that no money has gone to people whom the police would describe as extremist”. He also said the Government’s evaluation of Prevent funding compared unfavourably to MOPAC, which publishes independent evaluations of each funding round.<sup>159</sup>

**Recommendation 9: MOPAC should assess the outputs of groups in London that have received funding from Prevent to ensure that there is not duplication with its own work and that its successes can be benchmarked.**

Lord Harris highlighted in his 2022 review that the 44 local authorities deemed to have the highest risk of radicalisation receive additional Prevent funding from the Home Office to help manage that risk, and that 23 London boroughs received this priority funding in the last allocation. He recommended that the “Home Office should ensure every London Borough receives some degree of direct funding for their Prevent work and it would not be sensible

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<sup>153</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023

<sup>154</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent](#), 8 February 2023

<sup>155</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023

<sup>156</sup> GLA, [Mayor announces new £875,000 funding to help London’s communities tackle hate and extremism](#), 12 April 2023.

<sup>157</sup> MOPAC have delivered three rounds of Shared Endeavour Funding: (1) £800,000 in 2020-21 (£400,000 each from Mayor and Google); (2) £600,000 (Mayor funds only) in 2021-22; (3) £725,000 (Mayor funds only) in 2022-23. Applications for the fourth round of funding close on 22 May 2023. [More information here.](#)

<sup>158</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>159</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023; access evaluations of calls one and two of the Shared Endeavour Fund [here.](#)

for the Home Office to reduce the support it provides to London in future funding rounds”.<sup>160</sup>

In February 2023, the Home Office announced it “will move to a regional Prevent delivery model directly overseen by the Home Office and significantly reduce the number of local authority areas of highest threat that we fund”.<sup>161</sup> The Independent Review of Prevent supported the move to a regionalised model for funding but said the plans would “need to address specific and unique requirements in London, where there are a high number of priority areas in close proximity to one another and where individuals may be particularly likely to move and interact across priority and non-priority areas within the Greater London area”.<sup>162</sup>

Jane Corrigan told the Committee that she was concerned that the move to a regionalised model of funding would mean “London will move from having 22 prioritised areas down to having seven, and that may even reduce further to five. That obviously causes some concern because what we do not have is that dedicated resource in those areas”.<sup>163</sup> Oliver Levinson said he would be “disappointed” if funding for Prevent delivery in London decreased.<sup>164</sup> The Committee believes that the move to a regionalised model for Prevent should not reduce the overall allocation of funding for Prevent in London.

### Safeguarding and vulnerability

The Committee heard different views on whether Prevent should be focussed on meeting the safeguarding needs of people referred into the programme. Charlotte Dixon-Sutcliffe MBE said that people associated Prevent with the police, which creates suspicion amongst certain communities about the aims of the programme.<sup>165</sup> Brendan Cox said if the Prevent programme was more associated with safeguarding, more people would be willing to engage with it.<sup>166</sup>

*“What we see is this kind of stigmatisation of Prevent because it is associated with the police and where people are perhaps suspicious of that and that state intervention. It ends up leading to greater suspicion and just undermining something that really should be of benefit to individuals and that should be incredibly helpful in working with people who are vulnerable because, ultimately, it is about safeguarding. When the police are stepping in, then it is becoming maybe more associated with criminality*

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<sup>160</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022

<sup>161</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023

<sup>162</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023

<sup>163</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>164</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>165</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.7

<sup>166</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.9

*and at its heart in those early stages it is about vulnerability and about safeguarding.”<sup>167</sup>*

**Charlotte Dixon-Sutcliffe MBE, Survivors Against Terror**

Commander Richard Smith said that prevention of radicalisation required all parts of the system – services, families and organisations – to work collaboratively. However, he thought it was right for Prevent to be a police-led programme, to ensure it is joined up with the Pursue, Protect and Prepare elements of the CONTEST strategy.<sup>168</sup> Oliver Levinson said, “There are many, many reasons why the Met should be at the forefront of looking after a safeguarding for radicalisation programme”.<sup>169</sup>

The Independent Review of Prevent said, “Prevent must return to its overarching objective: to stop individuals from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism”. It said Prevent “has increasingly come to be seen as synonymous with safeguarding”<sup>170</sup> but that it should focus primarily on protecting the public from extremists. It said, “Prevent too often bestows a status of victimhood on all who come into contact with it, confusing practitioners and officials as to Prevent’s fundamental purpose”.<sup>171</sup>

Robin Simcox told the Committee that approaching Prevent through a safeguarding model was appropriate for children at risk but certain adults such as Ali Harbi Ali, who murdered Sir David Amess (former MP for Southend West), could not be “classified as vulnerable in any meaningful sense of the word”.<sup>172</sup>

Oliver Levinson said Prevent has a broad remit, from working with young and vulnerable people to prevent radicalisation, to working to de-radicalise “hard-core terrorists” in prison. He said for the latter group, safeguarding may be a less appropriate term; but that “for much of what Prevent does, safeguarding is critical”.<sup>173</sup>

Commander Dom Murphy QPM said: “We are, in effect, using the ability to safeguard somebody as an extension of managing the threat and potential harm to the public or that individual”.<sup>174</sup> Detective Superintendent Jane Corrigan said, “Safeguarding still has a big place in Prevent”.<sup>175</sup> She said many people referred into Prevent will have a safeguarding concern and it was important for the Prevent programme to be able to respond effectively to safeguarding concerns as a means to intervene early and prevent radicalisation.

*“In terms of the cohort of individuals that we deal with within the Prevent Programme, there are a lot of safeguarding needs. About 40 per cent have some form*

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<sup>167</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.7

<sup>168</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023

<sup>169</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.23

<sup>170</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023, p.6

<sup>171</sup> Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023, p.6

<sup>172</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.8

<sup>173</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>174</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>175</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

*of mental ill health and we also see a large range of other complex needs, whether it be adverse childhood experience. We see a range of domestic abuse within our casework and just individuals who are looking for a sense of belonging. [...] It would be a loss for us to move away from that and to just look at terrorism risk. I would much prefer to intervene early and identify an early indication that somebody is not going on to be managed under Prevent because they have not gone so far down that radicalisation journey.”<sup>176</sup>*

**Detective Superintendent Jane Corrigan, Metropolitan Police Service**

The Independent Review of Prevent also said, “The term ‘vulnerable’ should be reserved for those who, because of circumstances beyond their control, are at particular risk of falling prey to exploitation or abuse”. It said, “That is not the case for most of those likely to be radicalised”. The review recommended that Prevent moves away from language of “vulnerability” and towards “susceptibility”, wherever accurate. It suggested that the Vulnerability Assessment Framework should be renamed the Prevent Assessment Framework.<sup>177</sup> Commander Dom Murphy QPM and Kenny Bowie did not agree that a change in language from vulnerability to susceptibility was useful or needed.<sup>178</sup>

**Recommendation 10: The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime should make representations at the London Contest Board that Prevent in London should continue to be led by evidence based demand to uphold its safeguarding responsibilities and prevent people from becoming involved in terrorism.**

## Changing ideologies and patterns of radicalisation

Between 2017-18 and 2021-22, London saw an increase in the number of “mixed, unstable or unclear” referrals made to Prevent. The Government has published disaggregated figures for 2021-22 – the first time such figures have been published – providing more granular detail. It shows that 13 people in London were referred to Prevent due to concerns of incel (involuntary celibate) ideology, and 11 people were referred due to concerns related to school massacre.<sup>179</sup>

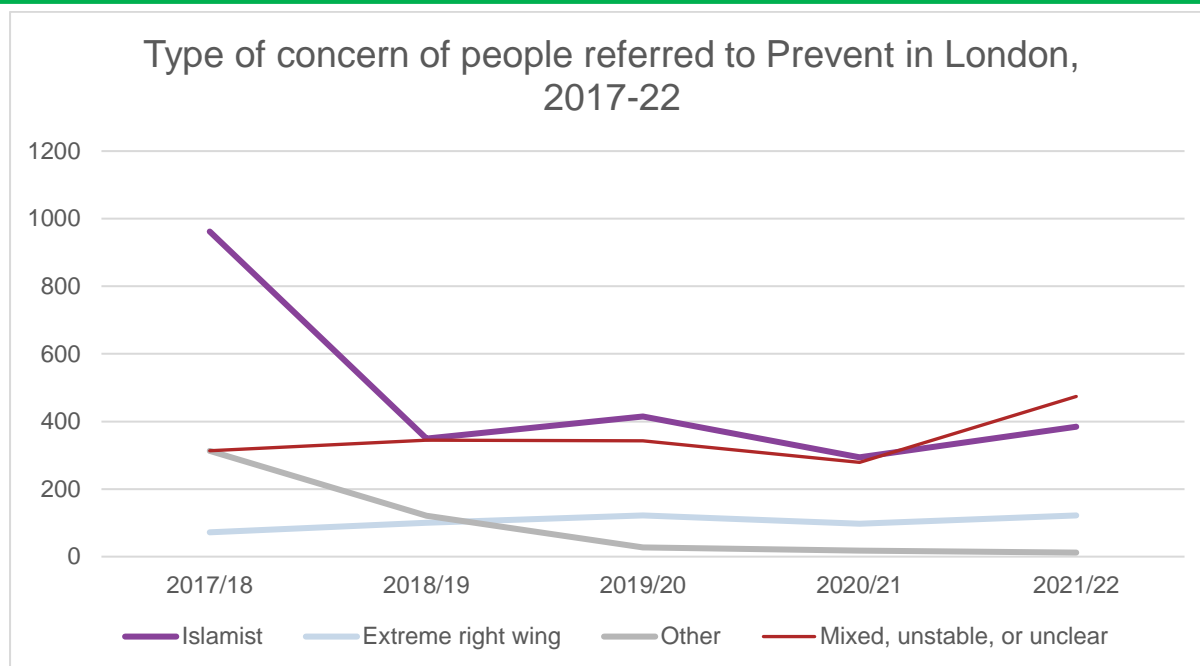
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<sup>176</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>177</sup> The Vulnerability Assessment Framework is used, as part of the Channel Process, to assess an individual’s engagement with a group, cause or ideology; their internet to cause harm; and their capability to cause harm. See: Home Office, [Independent Review of Prevent’s report and government response](#), 8 February 2023, p.45.

<sup>178</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 8 March 2023

<sup>179</sup> Home Office, [Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme](#), 26 January 2023



The Committee heard evidence that the ideologies driving extremists are becoming more diffused and complex. Brendan Cox said there has been a “fracturing of the threats”. He said alongside the recent rise in extreme right-wing ideology, there has been a rise in incel ideology and cases of people with no apparent coherent ideology.<sup>180</sup>

*“We have seen in some cases recently, where terror attacks have happened where, over the period of their radicalisation, they have experimented with different radicalisations. They might have been far right, they might have then dipped into Islamism and they might have dipped into incel culture. As well as keeping an eye on those ideologies that are driving it, what we have to do is also really think about those susceptibilities.”<sup>181</sup>*

**Brendan Cox, Survivors Against Terror**

Dr Shiraz Maher also said Islamism remains the biggest threat in terms of “its desire and ability to conduct mass casualty threats”, but added: “We have seen a rise and an uptick in referrals being made under what might be called far-right violent extremism or unclear and mixed ideological affiliations”.<sup>182</sup> Commander Richard Smith said the ideologies of people radicalising online was not always straightforward:

*“Some of them have very clear ideological beliefs and are pursuing them and seeking out material online that reinforces them and takes them further. Some of them have what we described as mixed, unclear or unstable ideologies and they are looking at a range of hate-filled ideologies. Some of that perhaps is difficult to reconcile and*

<sup>180</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.4

<sup>181</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.4

<sup>182</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.4



*understand why that might be, but it is certainly quite a significant part of our Prevent casework.”<sup>183</sup>*

**Commander Richard Smith, Metropolitan Police Service**

The Committee was told by Dr Shiraz Maher that there “is no single pathway and there is no single profile of an individual who becomes radicalised into violent extremist movements”.<sup>184</sup> Commander Richard Smith said there may be complex drivers that lead people to become vulnerable to radicalisation, including experiences of “domestic abuse, drug abuse in the household or mental illness in the household”.<sup>185</sup> Robin Simcox said recent examples of terrorist acts have shown how profiles of perpetrators can vary significantly.

*“There are a broad range of ideologies of concern and really the radicalisation process occurs when ideology meets and grievances meet and susceptibilities and people are taken down a dangerous path. If you look in terms of profile, one of the 7/7 bombers was 18 years old, and the man who firebombed a migrant centre in Dover recently was 66; completely different backgrounds, profiles, age, ideology and motivation, but both willing to carry out acts of violence.”<sup>186</sup>*

**Robin Simcox, Commissioner for Countering Extremism**

Charlotte Dixon-Sutcliffe MBE said people who have a grievance or are disenfranchised find it very easy to find a group that will support and encourage those feelings.<sup>187</sup> Brendan Cox said it was important for Prevent to look at the common susceptibilities that draw people into dangerous ideologies.<sup>188</sup>

*“We certainly know from our research that domestic abuse is a significant factor in the background of quite a number of our terrorist cohort, growing up with domestic abuse and also being perpetrators of domestic abuse, and that appears to be to an extent statistically significant but, again, our understanding of that is probably not as comprehensive as we would want it to be.”<sup>189</sup>*

**Commander Richard Smith, Metropolitan Police Service**

Commander Richard Smith said the Met is “seeing a steady increase in the numbers of younger people, both in the Prevent cohort and more specifically in our investigation casework”. He said responding to “young people with complex needs who nonetheless [are] posing a very significant threat to public safety or indeed to themselves, or sometimes both at once, can be really quite challenging”.<sup>190</sup> Chief Superintendent Helen Williams said acute

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<sup>183</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.27

<sup>184</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.4

<sup>185</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.30

<sup>186</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.4

<sup>187</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.3

<sup>188</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022

<sup>189</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.31

<sup>190</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.30

childhood experiences, such as experience of domestic abuse, appeared to be a significant risk factor for radicalisation. She said there was academic research taking place to better understand these links, and to consider how intervention can take place earlier.<sup>191</sup>

The Committee is concerned that there is only limited evidence available on what makes young people more susceptible to radicalisation. With extremist ideologies becoming increasingly diversified and complex, it is important to better understand which young people are most at risk of radicalisation.

**Recommendation 11: MOPAC should work with the Met to conduct a review of the key risk factors for young people becoming radicalised. This could include a review of case files of successful Prevent referrals and young people arrested for terrorist offences over the past five years.**

### Radicalisation online

The Committee also heard evidence on patterns and trends related to radicalisation taking place online. Dr Shiraz Maher told the Committee that terrorist groups were “embracing new technologies and embracing them in disruptive ways”, including the way they organise and share extremist content online through peer-to-peer social networks.<sup>192</sup> He said research has shown that far-right actors have been looking to adopt some of the technological innovations made by jihadists.<sup>193</sup>

The issue of online radicalisation was highlighted by Lord Harris in his 2022 review. In particular, he expressed concern that COVID-19 may have increased the risk of people self-radicalising, as more people spent more time online.<sup>194</sup> This concern was not shared by all guests. Robin Simcox told the Committee that the “idea that COVID-19 fundamentally changed the landscape is unproven at best” and is “built on a series of assumptions that I just think are either questionable or need further testing”. He said that people also “spend significant amounts of time online when they are out and about as opposed to being stuck at home”.<sup>195</sup>

Robin Simcox also told the Committee that the number of cases of people being radicalised entirely online is “perhaps rarer than we sometimes think” as the line between our online and offline lives is becoming “increasingly blurred”. He said radicalisation often takes place where people access extremist content online then build physical relationships with on-the-ground activists.<sup>196</sup> Similarly, Dr Shiraz Maher said an “offline component” can be “one of the most decisive factors in distinguishing between those who are either mere recipients or

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<sup>191</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.31

<sup>192</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.7

<sup>193</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.2-3

<sup>194</sup> Lord Toby Harris, [London Prepared: a city-wide endeavour – An Independent Review of London’s Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident](#), March 2022, p.4

<sup>195</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.4

<sup>196</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.1

consumers of extremist content online versus those who mobilise into conducting an attack in that way”.<sup>197</sup>

*“The human dimension matters and networks and physical relationships also still matter as much in 2022 as they did a couple of decades ago. It is often on-the-ground activism and recruitment that can make the difference in these cases and where radicalisation takes place.”<sup>198</sup>*

**Robin Simcox, Commissioner for Countering Extremism**

However, Commander Richard Smith warned that there is an increasing pattern of people becoming entirely self-radicalised online, without having any communication with active extremist groups. He also said he was concerned about the availability of online content that can radicalise people: “At the heart of it, that availability of horrific – and some of it is really horrendous – material online is a massive concern”.<sup>199</sup>

Commander Richard Smith said a range of approaches was needed to tackle it, including the legislative and regulatory mechanisms brought by the Online Safety Bill. The Bill, currently passing through Parliament,<sup>200</sup> will introduce new rules for companies that host search engines or user-generated content to better protect its users from harmful content. Ofcom will be given new powers as a regulator and companies will be able to be fined for failure to adhere to rules. The Government says its Bill will “make the UK the safest place in the world to be online while defending free expression”.<sup>201</sup>

Robin Simcox said he broadly supported the approach taken by the Government but said there was a challenge in how Government legislated to protect people from harmful content without censoring “content that falls within perfectly acceptable realms of free speech”. He said there should be an approach that protects children from accessing certain content online, while ensuring adults can “essentially access whatever they like, providing it is within the law”.<sup>202</sup>

Kenny Bowie and Commander Richard Smith both said the Bill would need to find the right balance in regulating “legal but harmful” content. Kenny Bowie suggested the current draft of the Bill does not go far enough to force tech companies to regulate harmful content they host.

An Online Harms Working Group exists to coordinate work across MOPAC and the GLA in relation to online harms, including work related to the Online Safety Bill. The Mayor has said the working group will continue to monitor the passage of the Online Safety Bill through

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<sup>197</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.2

<sup>198</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022, p.1

<sup>199</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript](#), 11 January 2023, p.27

<sup>200</sup> UK Parliament, [Online Safety Bill](#), accessed 13 December 2022

<sup>201</sup> DCMS, [Online safety Bill: factsheet](#), 19 April 2022

<sup>202</sup> London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee – transcript 2](#), 30 November 2022

parliament.<sup>203</sup> However, there is a need for a strategic group on online harms to exist beyond the passage of the Bill to keep pace with changes in the online landscape. This should include, within its scope, a specific focus on protecting people from online radicalisation and terrorist content.

**Recommendation 12: Once the Online Safety Bill is passed, MOPAC should renew the terms of reference for its Online Harms Working Group, to enable it to provide strategic leadership on efforts to address online harms in London.**

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<sup>203</sup> London Assembly, [MQT Working group on online harms](#), 19 May 2022

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## Committee Activity

### **London Assembly Police and Crime Committee (formal meeting) – 30 November 2022**

- Lord Harris of Haringey
- Robin Simcox, Commissioner for the Commission for Countering Extremism
- Charlotte Dixon-Sutcliffe MBE, Chair, Survivors Against Terror
- Brendan Cox, Co-Founder of Survivors Against Terror
- Dr Shiraz Maher, Director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, King's College London.

### **London Assembly Police and Crime Committee (formal meeting) – 11 January 2023**

- Oliver Levinson, Head of Countering Violent Extremism, MOPAC
- Kenny Bowie, Director of Strategy and Metropolitan Police Service Oversight, MOPAC
- Chief Superintendent Helen Williams, Commander for Protective Security Operations, Metropolitan Police Service
- Commander Richard Smith, Head of Countering Extremism, Metropolitan Police Service
- Deputy Commissioner Jonathan Smith, London Fire Brigade.

### **London Assembly Police and Crime Committee (formal meeting) – 8 March 2023**

- Oliver Levinson, Head of Countering Violent Extremism, MOPAC
- Kenny Bowie, Director of Strategy and Metropolitan Police Service Oversight, MOPAC
- Commander Dom Murphy QPM, Head of Counter Terrorism Command SO15, Metropolitan Police Service
- Detective Superintendent Jane Corrigan, Head of SO15 Local Operations and Prevent lead, Metropolitan Police Service.

## Other formats and languages

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### Chinese

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### Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज का सारांश अपनी भाषा में  
चाहिए तो उपर दिये हुए नंबर पर फोन करें या उपर दिये  
गये डाक पते या ई मेल पते पर हम से संपर्क करें।

### Vietnamese

Nếu ông (bà) muốn nội dung văn bản này được dịch sang  
tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi bằng điện  
thoại, thư hoặc thư điện tử theo địa chỉ ở trên.

### Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের একটা সারাংশ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান,  
তাহলে দয়া করে ফো করবেন অথবা উল্লিখিত ডাক ঠিকানায় বা  
ই-মেইল ঠিকানায় আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

### Greek

*Εάν επιθυμείτε περίληψη αυτού του κειμένου στην γλώσσα  
σας, παρακαλώ καλέστε τον αριθμό ή επικοινωνήστε μαζί  
μας στην ανωτέρω ταχυδρομική ή την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση.*

### Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ اپنی زبان میں  
درکار ہو تو، براہ کرم نمبر پر فون کریں  
یا مذکورہ بالا ڈاک کے پتے یا ای میل  
پتے پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

### Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinize çevrilmiş bir özetini  
okumak isterseniz, lütfen yukarıdaki telefon  
numarasını arayın, veya posta ya da e-posta  
adresi aracılığıyla bizimle temasa geçin.

### Arabic

الوصول على ملخص لهذا المستند بلغة  
فجرء الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو الاتصال على  
العنوان البريدي أو عنوان البريد  
الإلكتروني أعلاه.

### Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣਾ  
ਚਾਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ  
ਉਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਡਾਕ ਜਾਂ ਈਮੇਲ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

### Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજનો સાર તમારી ભાષામાં  
જોઈતો હોય તો ઉપર આપેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરો  
અથવા ઉપર આપેલ ટપાલ અથવા ઈ-મેઈલ સરનામા  
પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.



## Connect with us

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