

SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE			
Report Title	Update on Implementing the Counter Extremism Strategy		
Key Decision	No	Item No.	10
Ward	All		
Contributors	Head of Public Protection and Safety		
Class		Date	07 March 2018

## 1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to note the update of the work of the Community Coordinator, who is working to coordinate and implement Lewisham's response to the priorities of the Counter-Extremism Strategy.

## 2. Background

This Counter Extremism Strategy (published in October 2015) has been developed to be distinct but complementary to the work laid out by the Government's CONTEST Strategy, but it also recognises that we must go further. We must counter the ideology of non-violent and violent extremists alike. We must continue our efforts to tackle neo-Nazi as well as Islamist extremism and respond better to the growing problems of hate crime in our communities.

Just as important is addressing the underlying problem of segregated and isolated communities that can provide an environment in which extremism can take root, and allow the continuance of illegal, violent, cultural practices such as FGM.

To deal with the broad challenge of extremism the Strategy proposes out that we will focus on four areas:

- **Countering extremist ideology** – Continue to confront and challenge extremist propaganda, ensuring no space goes uncontested, including online, promoting a better alternative, and supporting those at risk of radicalisation.
- **Building a partnership with all those opposed to extremism** – Go further to stand with and build the capacity of mainstream individuals, community organisations and others in our society who work every day to challenge extremists and protect vulnerable individuals.

- ***Disrupting extremists*** – Create new targeted powers, flexible enough to cover the full range of extremist behaviour, including where extremists sow division in our communities and seek to undermine the rule of law.
- ***Building more cohesive communities*** – Review, understand and address the reasons why some people living here do not identify with our country and our values. A new Cohesive Communities Programme will help those communities most at risk of isolation.

### 3. Delivering a new partnership

The Home Office, through the Counter Extremism Strategy, aims to develop a new network, linking individuals and groups around Britain who are already standing up to extremists in their communities. Working with local partners, including local authorities, it aims to identify the most impactful and relevant groups already doing important work to protect communities. They will work with all those committed to defeating extremism.

**The Special Interest Group on Counter Extremism (SIGCE)** is a local authority (LA) network co-chaired by Cllr Hazel Simmons (Executive Leader of Luton Borough Council) and Cllr Debra Coupar (Executive Member for Communities, Leeds City Council) partnered by the Local Government Association (LGA), the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations (CTPSR) at Coventry University, and funded by the Home Office (HO) and the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Funding has been secured for 2 years.

The network will bring together councils in England and Wales to share learning and experience, and to promote good practice on countering extremism beyond terrorism. The network was formally launched on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November by Baroness Williams, Minister of State for Countering Extremism (HO) and Lord Bourne, Parliamentary Under Secretary for State, Minister for Faith (DCLG).

The SIGCE will build on the work of a previous Special Interest Group on Managing Far Right Activity with a remit broadened to encompass all forms of extremism and intolerance relevant to England and Wales. At a minimum, this is likely to include Islamist extremism and the Far Right.

The rationale is simple: that councils are best placed in their community leadership role to understand what does work, and what does not work in meeting the challenges of extremism within their own communities, and that on this basis councils can develop good practice from sharing the learning gained from each other's experiences and working together on this agenda.

The **Prime Minister's Engagement Forum** is another high profile example of this new network. It will give Ministers the chance to hear directly from those challenging extremism and allow a broad range of people to discuss their experiences and work with the most senior people in government.

Finally, the Home Office's Counter Extremism Unit stands ready to support those in our network who seek our help. This could include – for example – providing social media training, technical assistance to enable a small charity to set up a website, or targeted funding for specific projects. This will help our partners to expand their campaigns, allowing mainstream voices to reach a wider audience.

#### 4. **The Community Coordinator Role**

The Home Office Counter-Extremism unit has offered 12 month grant agreement to the London Borough of Lewisham to employ a Community Coordinator, whose role is to oversee the coordination of activity to implement the priorities of the Counter-Extremism Strategy.

The Lewisham Community Coordinator, Megan Mellor, based within the Crime, Enforcement & Regulation Service, has been in post since May 2017. Although directly employed by local authorities, community coordinators are very much ambassadors of the counter extremism strategy, working across their local areas with a variety of groups, organisations and partners to support the counter-extremism agenda. Community Coordinators are expected to develop an expert understanding of extremism locally, build strong relationships with local partners and then support those partners by signposting them to support opportunities which will consolidate and amplify their message.

The role goes beyond challenging terrorism to challenge those who target the vulnerable, including the young but seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society.

Update on the work of Lewisham's Community coordinator is set out in the table below:

	Home Office expectations of the Community Coordinator role	Update on work of Lewisham Community Coordinator
1	<p><i>To build an extensive understanding of issues and challenges with extremism of all forms in Lewisham, utilising excellent communication skills to represent the Council at internal and external forums, working closely with senior officers, elected Councilors and central Government.</i></p>	<p>The Lewisham Community Coordinator has developed and led on the boroughs work on understanding and tackling hate crime, which has included expanding the Hate Crime 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Reporting site programme, promoting the use of Lewisham’s hate crime reporting phone app and leading on Council and multi-agency action for Hate Crime Awareness Week.</p> <p>Leading on Hate Crime, she facilitates a multi-agency Hate Crime steering group and works to support the hate crime sub group of the Safer Neighbourhood Board.</p> <p>The Community Coordinator is also a key member of the Lewisham Prevent (CT) Delivery Group.</p> <p>The Community Coordinator works closely with and keeps the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and the Head of Public Protection &amp; Safety informed on Counter Extremism updates.</p> <p>On March 7<sup>th</sup>, the Community Coordinator will attend specific <b>Training for Community Co-ordinators and Local Authority Communications representatives</b> - This one-day training session has been designed to inform Community Co-ordinators and Local Authority Communications staff about the benefits of using PR and social media to amplify their messages and work.</p>
2	<p><i>To build good working relations with the Home Office and Metropolitan Police and work to implement, advocate for and advance community cohesion and counter extremism.</i></p>	<p>The Lewisham Community Coordinator represents the Local Authority at Home Office peer network events, Counter Extremism strategic meetings and London Hate Crime working groups.</p> <p>The Community Coordinator works closely with the police to access their data to gain a better understanding as to what hate crime is being reported monthly. She is also working closely with the VAWG Team to understand the issues around harmful cultural practices etc so that she can build a greater understanding of the extent and breadth of extremist issues within the borough</p> <p>She has also attended key meetings with the SO15 Counter Terrorism Unit and the Prevent coordinator to help to develop Lewisham’s Counter Terrorism Profile.</p>

<p>3</p>	<p><i>To develop an excellent local knowledge of the drivers, prevalence and wider harms of extremism of all kinds in Lewisham and an understanding of those affected by this.</i></p>	<p>The Community Coordinator has been working with vulnerable groups in the community. She has assisted on a focus group for members of the community with learning disabilities to discuss their fear of hate crime and the concerns that they have as an individual and how I can support them.</p> <p>She also set up a focus group specifically for Muslim women. This group was well attended and the women were in a safe space to discuss their concerns of feeling marginalised and isolated in the borough in light of the attacks as they felt they could be targeted when they left the house for simply being Muslim.</p> <p>She has facilitated the safer neighbourhood boards hate crime working group meeting and CE is discussed. This gives the opportunity for community groups to discuss issues that they have in the borough and she works alongside them to address and concerns that they have.</p> <p>The Community Coordinator is currently working with key community partners to deliver Lewisham’s second Positive women’s conference.</p> <p>Another key piece of work has been the work undertaken to help organising a faith and community leader conference for serious youth violence. This conference was an opportunity to bring together faith leaders and members of the community to discuss and tackle serious youth violence in Lewisham. The event enabled interfaith dialogue and focused on peer on peer violence and abuse; gender based violence including domestic and sexual violence; reduction of violence at all levels and reduce exposure to violence making it less “normal”. The purpose of this was to unite together to pledge in unison tangible actions to be used to tackle serious youth violence in Lewisham. The event was a success with 80+ people attending. People made pledges for how they would help stop the violence in Lewisham and work in partnership with other organisations.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p><i>Lead, engage and increase the resilience of communities and organisations/institutions challenging all forms of extremism, including the promotion of hatred and division.</i></p>	<p>The Community Coordinator has been working with numerous faith leaders across the Borough for the past few months to reinstate a Lewisham Interfaith Forum/Council, where faith groups can work together to share direction on a range of issues from engagement with the police, community tension</p>

	<p>monitoring at times of crises and partnership events such as the Lewisham Peace walk.</p> <p>The Community Coordinator has led on problem solving and tackling individual cases of hate crime or potential drivers of extremism over the past year. This has included successfully engaging premises to stop potential hate speech events and mobilising Council services and Police colleagues to swiftly deal with anti-Semitic graffiti found in the borough.</p> <p>She has also worked with particular community groups on specific issues of hatred or division. This included working closely with Lewisham Speaking up to develop new material to tackle hate crime perpetrated against those with learning difficulties.</p>
<p>5 <i>Identify and build a local network of trusted individuals and organisations who are involved in building stronger communities and/or countering extremism and promoting cohesion.</i></p> <p><i>The post holder will support these groups and organisations by identifying what help they require to expand their reach, including by signposting them towards and helping them submit high quality bids for the national competitive process for accessing both in-kind support and grants.</i></p>	<p>In September 2016 a national programme called ‘Building a Stronger Britain Together’ (BSBT) was launched offering in-kind support and grant funding for community groups to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empower those who wish to challenge extremism.</li> <li>• Support and network of “credible commentators” who want to challenge extremist narratives and promote mainstream views online.</li> <li>• Train a wide range of civil society groups to help them build and maintain a compelling online presence.</li> </ul> <p>There are two types of support available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Kind Support helps organisations build their capacity to reach larger audiences and expand their reach. For example through design and delivery of specific campaigns, professionally built websites or social media training.</li> <li>• Grant offer targeted funding for specific projects that support delivery of the Governments CE Strategy.</li> </ul> <p>The ‘Building a Stronger Britain Together’ programme will support civil society and community organisations who work to create more resilient communities, stand up to extremism in all forms and offer vulnerable individuals a positive alternative. This programme is a partnership between Government and groups and organisations who want to see extremism defeated.</p>

	<p>Organisations can bid for grant funding and in-kind support for specific projects that deliver this goal.</p> <p>Having waited for more than six months for the BSBT grant funding process to open, Lewisham's Community Coordinator worked to ensure that community groups and organisations were primed to put their best bids together by holding a BSBT Amplifier (funding opportunity) event in December 2017, which was attended by more than 20 groups.</p> <p>This was followed up by more 121 visits to help organisations in their preparation to be funding ready.</p> <p>When the BSBT grant funding finally opened in January 2018, the Community Coordinator worked with a large number of different community groups and organisations to reframe and redraft their applications before the deadline of mid-February. In the end, Lewisham had 8 completed bids for BSBT grant funding submitted to the Home Office. Successful recipients will be notified in late March 2018.</p> <p>While working to support groups in preparation for the opening of the BSBT funding, the Community Coordinator also signposted and supported community groups to apply for both the MOPAC Knife Crime funding opportunity and the MOPAC Safer Neighbourhood Fund in Lewisham, where she felt that their programmes met the criteria for these. The Community Coordinator continues to work to identify and signpost appropriate groups to funding streams when they become available.</p>
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## 5. Financial Implications

The Home Office Counter-Extremism Unit monitors the funding towards to Community Coordinator post.

## 6. Legal & Human Rights Implications

The Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 is about countering all forms of extremism: violent and non-violent; Islamist and the neo-Nazi. It will improve our understanding of the causes and impacts of extremism and do more to:

- counter the extremist ideology
- build a partnership with all those opposed to extremism
- disrupt extremists

- build more cohesive communities

The strategy also explains how the government will work in partnership with everyone who wants to defeat extremism.

The Council is under a number of statutory obligations to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the Council to formulate and implement a strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder; the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 requires the Council as a local housing authority to have policies and procedures for dealing with anti-social behaviour and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places the Council under a duty to have, when carrying out its functions, due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between persons of different racial groups.

The Local Government Act 1999 places a duty on the local authorities to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised having regard to the combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 empowers the local authority to do anything which it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of all or any persons within the local authority's area.

## **7. Equalities Implications**

Developing safe and secure communities is central to the work of the Council as a whole and in particular to the Community Services directorate. Reducing and preventing crime, reducing fear of crime and supporting vulnerable communities is critical to the well-being of all our citizens.

## **8. Crime and Disorder Implications**

Section 17 places a duty on partners to do all they can to reasonably prevent crime and disorder in their area. The level of crime and its impact is influenced by the decisions and activities taken in the day-to-day of local bodies and organisations. The responsible authorities are required to provide a range of services in their community from policing, fire protection, planning, consumer and environmental protection, transport and highways. They each have a key statutory role in providing these services and, in carrying out their core activities, can significantly contribute to reducing crime and improving the quality of life in their area.

## **9. Environmental Implications**

Key decisions made which may have environmental implications. Environmental services are consulted about all agreed activity before proceeding.

## **10. Conclusion**

The Crime, Enforcement & Regulation Service, along with key partners will continue to review its implementation of the Counter Extremism Strategy in Lewisham to ensure that all activity is in line with the sustainable communities' strategy, and the Safer Lewisham Strategy as well as having links to children's and young person's board and the health and wellbeing board and safeguarding Boards.

**For further information on this report please contact Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney Head of Public Protection & Safety, Community Services Directorate on 020 8314 9569.**