COUNTER TERRORISM POLICING

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Home Affairs Committee
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Home Affairs Committee: Combatting New Forms of Extremism

Dear Rt Hon Dame Karen Bradley MP
(cc: Home Affairs Committee members)

Thank you for inviting me to give evidence to the Home Affairs Committee on combatting new forms of extremism on 28th October 2025.

As promised during the session, please find attached a supplementary written submission, outlining further evidence that I hope will support your ongoing work. Please note that this paper is **confidential** and should not be published. If you would like to include any content from this submission in your final report, I would appreciate if my team could be consulted beforehand.

I welcome any questions this annex may prompt. Should it be helpful, I would be pleased to offer a private in-person briefing to expand on any of the points raised or provide additional detail that may be of use. This inquiry is of significant importance and reflects the risks we encounter in our CT casework on a daily basis. My team and I are fully committed to supporting it in any way we can.

During the session, I mentioned the report published by CTP and other leaders of Counter Terrorism for the 'Five Eyes' nations, calling for immediate international action to fight the growing threat to children posed by online extremism. Within that call to action, we called for a whole-of-society response involving the public, governments and tech industry - not just law enforcement. The report is publicly available and can be accessed here: Young People and Violent Extremism: A Call for Collective Action.

Yours sincerely

SIGNATURE

Laurence Taylor
National Lead for CT Policing
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November 2025

Combatting New Forms of Extremism: CTP Written Submission

Extremism, criminality and legal thresholds

During the session, Committee members expressed interest in the thresholds between legal extremism, hate crime, and terrorism, particularly the gap that allows harmful extremist behaviours to persist without meeting criminal thresholds. These behaviours, including online content, can foster permissive environments and cause harm, even if they remain lawful. Examples include:

- Promoting conspiracy theories that erode trust.
- Glorifying violence or extremist acts.
- Using inflammatory language to divide communities.
- Sharing manipulated content that fuels grievances.
- Normalising misogyny or incel ideologies.
- Employing coded language or symbolism linked to extremist movements.

Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of our democracy and protects the right to hold and share controversial views. This inevitably creates a narrow space where harmful behaviours can flourish legally. For further insight, I recommend the *Operating with Impunity* legal review by the Commission for Countering Extremism and Sir Mark Rowley (2021).

As noted in the session, this gap should not be addressed by expanding counter-terrorism legislation, a view supported by Jonathan Hall KC, Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation. CTP's remit remains deliberately narrow, focused on terrorism and hostile state threats. It is vital that wider partners, beyond CTP and law enforcement, are equipped to manage the full spectrum of extremist behaviours and associated risks. We must ensure that policing is not seen as the first line of defence or the primary responder to wider extremist harms or vulnerabilities.

Prevent data and demand

While Prevent plays a crucial role in addressing vulnerability to radicalisation, it is not a counter-extremism programme and it must not become the default mechanism for managing extremists or violence-fixated individuals ('VFIs') who fall below legal Prevent thresholds.[1]

As I noted during the session, we are experiencing extraordinary demand on Prevent. If referral volumes continue at their current trajectory for FY 2025/2026, it is projected that over 10,000 referrals will be received this FY, for the first time in Prevent history. Roughly half of all referrals so far this FY (since April 2025) are children. While referrals are increasing, this doesn't necessarily reflect an improvement in referral quality. This increase is placing significant pressure on capacity and creating a substantial demand challenge.

To evidence this rise in demand: last October (2024) we received ~740 referrals across the entire month. This October, we received ~1,200. This FY so far, we've had ~6,260 referrals (April to October 31st). Compared to the same period in 2024, where we received ~4,350 referrals, this has increased by 44%.

Now more than ever, Prevent faces the critical challenge of identifying individuals vulnerable to radicalisation, against a backdrop of increasingly complex needs, behaviours, and

[1] Under section 36 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, Prevent is intended to support individuals that are assessed by specialist CTP officers as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

mindsets. To illustrate the current breadth of Prevent demand, our top five referral categories so far this FY are:

1. No ideology
2. No ideology, other susceptibility to radicalisation identified
3. Extreme right wing
4. Fascination with Extreme Violence and Mass Casualty Attacks
5. Islamist

So far this FY, ~20% of all referrals are being put through for discussion at Channel (this doesn't necessarily mean that they have been adopted by Channel or have consented to Channel support – we do not have this data to hand yet). In recent years, the majority of referrals into Prevent have been closed as '*Non CT - referred on*', and that is still the case this FY so far. These cases are typically signposted out of Prevent to education, health, or local authority partners for appropriate support. This underscores an increasing trend where, while many referrals often reflect genuine concerns, they are not CT concerns and we are not the most suitable partner to address them.

So far this FY, child referrals closed as '*Non-CT - referred on*' have increased to ~60%. Of that cohort, ~70% were categorised as '*Fascination with Extreme Violence and Mass Casualty Attacks*'. Again, this suggests that although we are seeing an increase in potential VFIs being referred in, many of these referrals are not relevant and are more appropriately managed by other local partners.

To tackle extremism and give these individuals the support and risk-management they require, government must commit to a long-term strategic direction that prioritises sustained investment in policy development, funding, and cross-sector collaboration. This means embedding counter-extremism efforts across health, education, communities, and other key policy areas - not just within security and policing. A whole-system approach that is nationally consistent is essential to build resilience, address root causes, and ensure early intervention, enabling society to prevent extremist harms before they escalate into illegality.

Given the significant number of children being referred into Prevent, recent increases in inappropriate referrals (though referred in with good intentions) raise serious concerns. It is not the purpose of Prevent to encourage referrals of this nature, nor to retain the details of children within CT systems when they do not present a terrorist threat. While some of these children may pose other types of risk, such concerns must be managed through appropriate safeguarding or statutory agency pathways, rather than CTP interventions and resources.

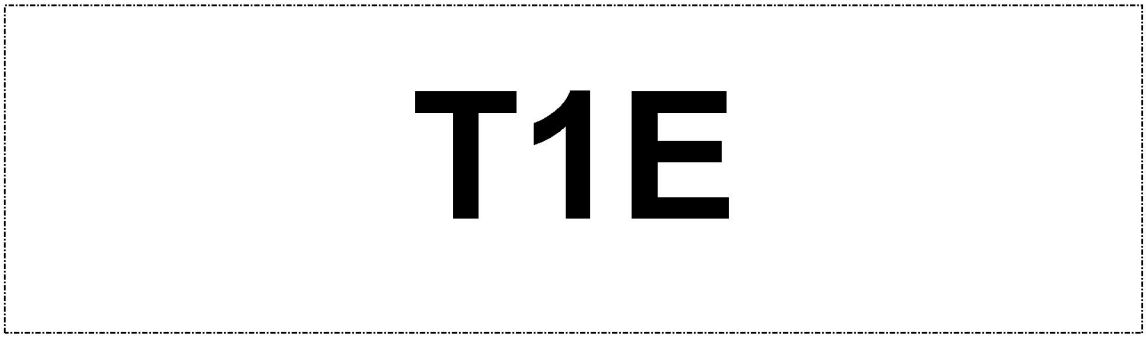
We continue to work with the Home Office and statutory partners to improve the quality of referrals. When in doubt, especially for friends and family, we would always prefer a referral be made, allowing CTP expert officers to assess the concern, rather than risk it being disregarded. However, to ensure statutory partners make appropriate, high-quality referrals, their Prevent training and guidance must be robust. The Home Office is responsible for equipping partners with the knowledge to identify what should and shouldn't be referred. CTP supports this by contributing expertise, data insights, and content for training products.

<u>Online platforms</u>

I committed to sharing additional information in response to Paul Kohler MP's question on our relationship with platforms, and whether some platforms are better than others at the removal of illegal content.

Our Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (CTIRU) operates through close cooperation with industry, referring unlawful terrorism-related content to tech companies for removal. Many

takedowns depend on this engagement. Our relationships with platforms have significantly improved since CTIRU's creation, and the Unit now holds 'trusted flagger' status with several platforms, ensuring its referrals are prioritised by moderation teams.



There may be several potential reasons for platforms not engaging or removing content, such as individual platform policies and positioning on content removal, differences in resources and scale, their use of technology and detection tools, and platform design.